Risk Distance: The Loss of Strength Gradient and Colombia's Geography of Impunity

By

Geoffrey Demarest

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Chairperson Stephen Egbert

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William I. Woods

_____

Xingong Li

_____

Theodore A. Wilson

_____

Robert Baumann

Date Defended: November 22, 2013

The Dissertation Committee for Geoffrey Demarest

certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

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Chairperson Stephen Egbert

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Abstract

Geoffrey Demarest

Department of Geography, 2013

University of Kansas

The dissertation proposes a theoretical category of distance, *risk distance*, as a prompt for understanding outcomes in internal armed struggles. Geographers are familiar with *cost distance* -- conceiving distance according to the time or material resources needed to move people and things. Risk distance is closer conceptually to what strategists might recognize as the distance to the 'culminating point', which is a theoretical point in space and time beyond which an armed force would run an imprudent risk to its survival (if it were to continue to pursue, attack, or remain in the same position, etc.). Combat leaders seek to lengthen the distances to their culminating points and shorten those of their opponents. Cost and risk distances are generally related inversely: risk distances can shorten as cost distances increase. In Colombia's internal conflict, a variety of geographic phenomena (rugged upslopes, international borders, urban slums, jungles) share effect on risk distance -- favoring a fugitive entity by disproportionately shortening the risk distances of its pursuers.

Risk distance also applies to civilian activity. If the Euclidean distance from a rural community to a hospital maternity ward were 70 kilometers, the cost distance might be six hours

and four thousand pesos. The rough ride or danger of attack along the way could lead expecting parents to perceive the risk distance as only thirty kilometers down the road or two hours of travel time. The distance to the feared point of too much risk makes their attempt to go to that hospital untenable.

In Colombia, violent armed groups escape to areas beyond their rivals' reach, seeking routes (typically long-established smuggling routes) that help shorten the pursuers' risk distances. These routes and sanctuaries, created within armed rivalry, are often spatially coincident with rural population centers that also appear remote, that is, beyond many quotidian risk distances. This spatial coincidence (of conditions involving certain prosaic and violent rivalry risk distances) contributes to causing some rural communities to fall victim to or collaborate in organized violence; but the differential in rivals' risk distances is by itself more significant to the prolongation or outcome of internal conflict.

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Glossary

Afrodecendiente -- African descendant Colombians

AUC -- *Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia* (United Self Defense Forces) An anti-Communist guerrilla or paramilitary formed of smaller regional paramilitaries.

Blobology -- Government jargon for the methodology for determining illicit cultivation extents and their depiction.

CAP – *Comandos Armados del Pueblo* (People's Armed Comandos) Rogure splinter of the FARC in Medellín first appeared circa 1996, now perhaps defunct.

CAR -- *Corporaciones Autónomous Regionales* (Autonomous Regional Corporations) A watershed-based environmental protection and land use planning bureaucracy.

CCAI -- *Centro de Coordinación de Acción Integral* (Center for Coordination of Integrated Action) Coordinating mechanism and umbrella designation of the national security plan. Some consider CCAI to be the bureaucratic descendant of Plan Colombia.

CERAC -- *Centro de Recursos Para el Análisis de Conflictos* (Conflict Analysis Resource Center) A leading Colombian think-tank.

Chiva -- A rural bus

CINEP -- Center for Research and Popular Education/Peace Program (CINEP/PPP)

CNG -- *Coordinadora Nacional Guerrillera* (national Guerrilla Coordinator) Formed in 1988 to coordinate actions of the FARC, ELN, M19 and some smaller groups.

CNSB -- *Coordinadora Nacional Simón Bolívar* (National Coordinator Simon Bolivar) Same as CNG.

Despeje -- literally a clearing. *Despeje* is used in Colombian Spanish, in the context of the Colombian insurgency, to mean a zone from which government armed forces have been removed. (See page 57)

ELN -- *Ejército de Liberación Nacional* (National Liberation Army) The only other significant guerrilla organization remaining besides the FARC

EPL -- *Ejéricito Popular de Liberación* (Popular Liberation Army) A communist guerrilla that disbanded in pieces over time. Some remnants apparently remain.

Euclidean distance -- Unimpeded 'normal' mathematical distance measured in established units such as inches, meters, or miles -- sometimes said, "as the crow flies."

FARC -- *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) -- Largest of the Colombian guerrilla organizations

FARC-EP -- *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército Popular* (same as FARC)

FTC -- *Fuerza de Tarea Conjunta* (Joint Task Force)

JTF -- Joint Task Force A (usually temporary) composition of elements from more than one military service designed and deployed for a specific purpose.

M19 -- *Movimiento 19 de Abril* (April 19th Movement)

MAP – *Minas Anti-persona* (Antipersonnel mine)

Misto -- A rural bus, see *Chiva*

MUSE -- *Municiones Sin Explotar* (Unexploded Munitions)

Toma – A 'taking' or armed occupation done as a temporary display of power.

ONDCP -- Office of the National Drug Control Program

PCC -- *Partido Comunista de Colombia* (Colombia Communist Party)

Plan Colombia -- Major Colombian Government security plan initiated in 1999 and heavily funded by the United States.

Section I. Introduction

Risk distance is the distance to a theoretical point in space and time beyond which it would be imprudent to continue to conduct an activity or to remain in a place. In the context of internal armed conflicts, certain geographic phenomena favor persons attempting to escape by disproportionately decreasing the risk distances of their pursuers. Meanwhile, the same phenomena endanger civilian populations located on or near the routes of escape.

Significance of the Research

Using a highly Geography-centric theoretical approach, I considered the spatial record of a long, complex armed struggle. Not discarded are other approaches that focus on insurgent or government intentions, or which launch their analyses from Marxist assumptions regarding class liberation and competition (revolutionary war), or calculate the influence of underlying socio-economic conditions -- but I relegate them to background narrative of secondary significance. I considered the Colombian record of organized violence in light of a theory about *distance*, and simultaneously tested the theory using the Colombian record. Colombian expressions of spatial correlations related to the conflict are compellingly consistent with the proposed theory.
The existence of remote areas (especially those from which there are multiple routes of egress) appears to be a more influential factor for the success or prolongation of a revolutionary or organized criminal effort than is any political, social or economic factor or set of factors. That said, admittedly dulling the incisiveness of the overall assertion, the geographic cost distances that define remoteness are dependent in part on specific attitudinal conditions that we describe as *political* or *social*. It appears incontrovertible that informational, ideological, or attitudinal

conditions at larger scales (of, say, the country, region and world) bear on relevant local competitive distances as I define them. As an example, Plan Colombia began in the late 1990s during the administrations of Andrés Pastrana in Colombia and William Clinton in the United States. The written trace of Plan Colombia leads back to a white paper released by the Colombian Government in May, 1999. (Ramsey 2009, p. 56). The Pastrana administration did not raise sufficient funds for what it proposed as the Colombian share of the six billion dollar plan, and did little better with foreign governments other than the United States. As a result, the United States provided most of the money for implementing the plan. On July 13 of the same year, President Clinton signed into law an aid package that authorized 768.5 million dollars in assistance over amounts previously authorized. I cannot determine the exact amount of funding that ultimately reached Colombia as a direct outgrowth of the plan, but by all estimates, it exceeded a billion dollars within the first several years. United States funding of the plan aimed mostly at counternarcotics efforts. After 2002, the funding broadened into counterinsurgency support. The phases of the plan called for a first concentration of effort in Putumayo Department, then a broadening of effort to south-eastern Colombia generally, then a further expansion to encompass the entire country. "The "basic elements" for the COLMIL–CNP [Colombian Military-National Police] counterdrug efforts were human rights, air interdiction, interdiction of precursor chemicals, COLMIL support of CNP counterdrug operations, destruction of drug processing laboratories and stockpiles, and coca eradication." (Ramsey 2009, p. 58). A significant portion of the plan's US funding went toward helicopters.

The flow of material support under Plan Colombia suffered some delay. However, not long after Al Qaeda's attack against the United States on Sptember 11, 2000, the United States dropped insistence on supporting only counternarcotics operations and not to counterinsurgency.

The changed expanded the geographic logic of operations supportable by Plan Colombia funding beyond coca growing regions. (Clinton 2000; Arms Control Today March 2002; Ramsey 2009, pp. 55-58). Not long after the '9/11' attacks in the United States, the peace process between the Pastrana Administration and the FARC began to deteriorate precipitously. By late 2002, Plan Colombia was in full swing, restrictions against counterinsurgency use of the funding disappeared, and the peace process was ended. Geostrategic events, in this case the attack of Al Qaeda against the United States, helped put the technological instrument that could most change tactical risk distances (the helicopter) into use during military pursuits in Colombia.

While the research does not directly address causes of conflict, the findings do appear to unbalance prevailing theory regarding the causes of violent social discontent, especially in rural areas. I make observations regarding the influence of distance without presuming an ideological preference regarding optimal distribution of power, where responsibility to provide economic necessities resides, what the proper degree of autonomy for local cultures ought to be, and so on. Nevertheless, I make some collateral observations in light of the dissertation's theoretical propositions about the effect of risk distance. It appears, for instance, that remoteness from services such as modern obstetrics, sewer systems, property courts, higher education or even electricity is in Colombia not a root cause of the violence or social conflict. Substandard economic performance ('unsatisfied basic needs' as described and measured in Colombia) in remote regions correlates to their transportation remoteness. Violence over time has also been correlated to transportation remoteness. However, I cannot find that those two correlations are evidence of a causal relationship from the former to the latter -- between material under-performance and organized violence. The opposite certainly appears true; close proximity of a

group of violent armed men can quickly diminish the material well-being of a geographically isolated community.

Trying to paint, adjust, or even understand the entire complex algorithm of factors said to bear on internal conflicts such as the one ongoing in Colombia is not a purpose of the research. It occurs, however, that the findings of the research call into doubt some often repeated or even assumed elements of that algorithm. For instance, the percentage of the overall population that might own agricultural land may be relatively inconsequential. That argument (that the percentage of the population owning agricultural land is inadequate and that said inadequacy is a root cause of social conflict) does not appear to be supported by correlation between the internal spatial distribution of violence in Colombia and the spatial distribution of types of land tenancy, repartition of holdings, demographic density or economic performance. On the other hand, a careful consideration of distances may help to explain the spatial distribution of violence, and therefore may serve to displace such agrarian justice explanations of internal violence generally. Additionally, the various forms of communally owned property in Colombia confound arguments that invoke numbers of owner-individuals versus extent of agricultural land holdings. There exists no single or even generally accepted logic as to how one might count the acreage share of an individual within the various forms of Colombian communal lands. The logic of ownership is as varied and convoluted as are the differing legal, bureaucratic and ideological lexicons used to promote that logic. A theory which focuses on more enduring phenoma (in this case a few standard geographic elements), and that exposes a clear correlation between those phenomena and a condition of moral concern (mortal organized violence), is likely to gain at least some space in the narrative of explanations.

Even among those who are insistent that the underlying cause of the conflict is socio-economic injustice, (including those who take as axiomatic that part of the injustice is an imbalance in agricultural land ownership) Colombia's physical geography has been an unavoidable mention. Gary Leech, a Marxist-leaning author and commentator on Colombia and guerrilla apologist, states, for instance, "Colombia's rugged mountains and vast expanses of jungle make the country an ideal place for waging guerrilla warfare." (Leech 2011, p. 152) Like everyone else who has noted the same, he does not explain why, although a common assumption seems to be that it is simply easier to hide in those types of terrain. I underline that the purpose of this research is not one of determining the causes of Colombia's or any other armed conflict. Nevertheless, if one of the services of new theory is to challenge prevailing and yet weakly founded notions of causation, or to help lend to common assumptions some greater amount of logic, then this research does that service to a degree. By coincidence, as I am just finishing writing this dissertation, the Colombian Historical Memory Group published their 'General Report' on the conflict. (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica 2013) Numerous governments and several international non-governmental organizations sponsored this long-awaited work. I do not consider it the definitive writing on the nature or cause of the conflict, and it immediately attracted sharp criticism as being ideologically skewed. (Mackenzie 2013). However, it carries an appreciable and apparently accurate if not complete historic record, including spatial renderings of the distribution and dynamics of the war's events and costs. The group's report is not inconsistent with the theoretical findings of this dissertation.

A geography-based approach to understanding the Colombian conflict contributes to the literature on that conflict, helping to test interpretations regarding the nature of the Colombian armed challenge to the state. It discusses, at least partially, why policy makers ended up

focusing on certain locales within the country, and therefore might contribute to debate regarding prescriptions for change, either in the prosecution of the war as a competitive matter, or the construction of a more peaceable social compact. Because the research is about spatial distribution of various phenomena from the point of view of Colombian representations of that spatial distribution, the dissertation also necessarily addresses the representations themselves – it considers Colombians' maps of Colombia.

The research also helps test theoretical bases for an anticipated Conflict Geography sub-discipline that will center, unlike classic military geography, on internal social struggles. The traditional concentration of military geography has been quite exclusively on physical aspects of terrain. See, for instance *Military Geography for the Professional and Public* (Collins 1998). I take the approach that it is only a didactic convenience to distinguish between human and physical geography; and that it is better to imagine geography as an interaction, not a separation of human from surroundings.

I also intend the dissertation as an intellectual springboard to a broader strategic understanding of the relationship of national strategic power to distance. The dissertation title invokes a theory that addressed global coercive power in the era of two nuclear superpowers, but that I believe may be applicable today. That said, I only make a half-hearted attempt within the four corners of the dissertation to generalize applicability beyond the Colombian experience.

Theoretical Context

I take as axiomatic that the competitive strength of armed elements diminishes in accordance with the distance they must travel away from their base or sanctuary. This 'law,' to which the dissertation title alludes, is known as the Loss of Strength Gradient, a term proposed

by economist Kenneth Boulding in 1962. (Boulding 1962). Although Professor Boulding used the term in relation to global strategy, the loss of strength gradient applies equally well to internal armed conflict. It is to be associated with Waldo Tobler's 'first law of geography' that "everything is related to everything else, but near things are more related" (Tobler, 1970); as well as to the observation called 'distance decay' in geography and economics. As applied by Professor Boulding, the loss of strength (or influence) caused by increasing distance has a predictable and graphable geographic consequence or manifestation.

As depicted in Figure 1, Professor Boulding imagined the geographic world simplified as the limitless line A-B, with point A being one country and point B another in a world of only two countries. The line between points A and B represents the distance between the two countries.

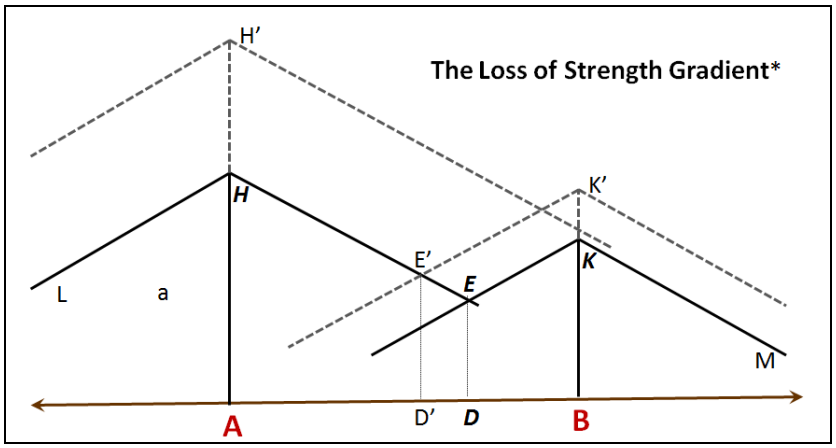


Figure 1: The Loss of Strength Gradient in a single-line world. Adapted from Boulding (Boulding 1962, p. 162).

Lines A-H and B-K represent each country's amount of military coercive power. The slope of the lines H-L, H-E, or K-M represent the loss of effective military power as distance increases – the loss of strength gradient. Point D is derived as the geographic point in the world at which the two countries, although unequal in overall military capacity, have equal strength. An increase in

coercive power by country B, represented by the line K-K' might move the geographic point of equality to point D' and so on logically. The graphic suggests that country A could achieve enough military power such that country B would have no place in the A-B world where B would enjoy military strength equal to that of A. Part of the suggestion is that a modest increase in coercive power on the part of B could greatly ameliorate even a great effort on the part of A to increase its coercive power, even moving the point of equal power closer to A.

In Figure 2, the world becomes a circle wherein the two countries A and B (points A and B) have equal military power at two points in the world, *D*. The smaller of the D-D arcs depicts the part of the world in which country B enjoys superior military strength.

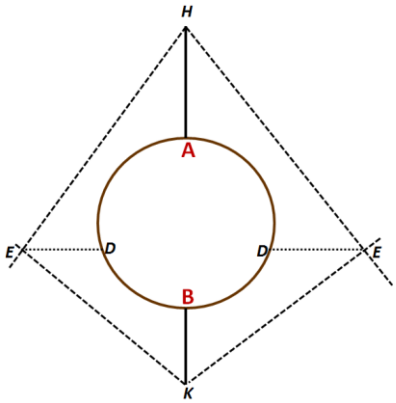


Figure 2: The Loss of Strength Gradient in a circular world.

In Figure 3, the world becomes a sphere, but if we continue to consider the strict competition of only the two countries A and B, then the line of equal power (Circle D) makes a parallel around the world. It creates a surface area in the shape of a beanie or simple yarmulke wherein country B still enjoys greater military power.

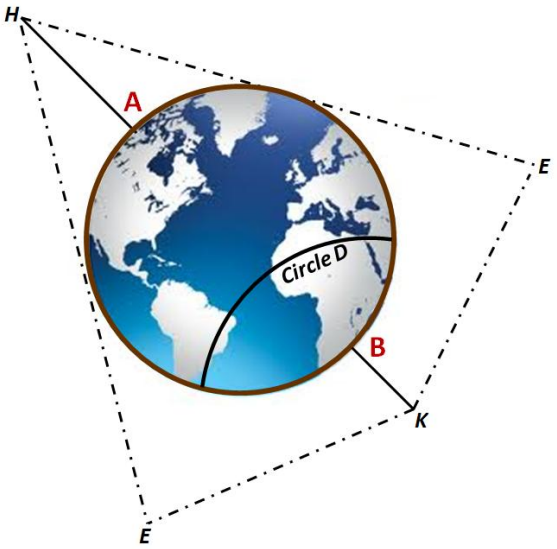


Figure 3: The Loss of Strength Gradient in a spherical world.

Figure 3: The Loss of Strength Gradient in a spherical world.

Depicting the points of equal power would become quite an intellectual and artistic chore if we equipped our imagined world with several countries of differing amounts of military power, each with varying national sizes and shapes. If we were to imagine many dozens of countries, all conspiring alliances and constantly evolving in coercive power, the depiction would be all but impossible to create. Perhaps because of that impossibility, writers on strategy who have gone about comparing countries' military power tend to overlook the effect of distance entirely. They concentrate instead on all the direct factors of competitive strength such as population, economic performance, diplomatic acumen, cyber power, and so on. None of the entries in a recent bibliography (prepared by the library of one of the US national strategy colleges) on the elements of national power discusses distance. (Ike Skelton Library 2011). This oblivion to the effect of distance on power does not make the influence of distance go away, however.

There exists another theoretical axiom, necessary as context for this dissertation's argument, and that relates directly to armed competitions. It is a sort of geographic equation for

the prudent application of armed force. It is also a core dynamic of classic military theory. Below is one expression of that dynamic, made by British lawyer and geographer T. Miller Maguire just before the age of the airplane began.

> "Before entering into battle a general must be most careful to secure his line or lines of retreat...a general whose road homeward or to his base is threatened or cut by a superior force must, if he loses a decisive battle, be ruined as well as defeated; while a general who has secured his line of communication will not be ruined even if defeated, but can fall back, procure recruits, replenish his waggons, and begin to fight again with a fair prospect of success." (Maguire, 1899, pp. 21-22).

The assertion has two parts. The first is about movement. Before an action or a contact, someone is going to travel. The second part of Maguire's assertion depends on the first, but is the more consequential point for understanding the equation of coercive competition. The careful leader anticipates contacts, and will make sure his line of withdrawal is secure in case he attacks or is attacked by a stronger force. About the only terminal mistake an insurgent or criminal leader can make is to get trapped. He can recover from everything else. Like so much else that is true, this truth reigns in both the palpable world and the solipsistic one. The competitive leader wants to correctly interpret and shape physical reality in order to act prudently *and* to affect the perceptions and mindset of the opposing leader. Another expression from Miller's *Outlines of Military Geography*:

> "The object of the strategist in drawing up his plan is so to arrange his marches and his lines of operations that, on the one hand, if he wins the battle he will not only defeat the enemy on the field but place him in a situation of much perplexity

> as to his future action, his line of retreat, and his supplies; and, on the other hand, if the battle be lost, he will have secured for himself a safe line of retreat, and an opportunity of recuperating his strength." (Maguire 1899, p. 30).

Again, there are two parts -- movement and secured options. Maguire emphasizes that contacts do not just happen; someone makes decisions to be somewhere. He also notes that competent strategy implies the constant measurement of relative power, but with prudence to know that those measurements will often be wrong. Maguire's statements make the line of retreat a central geographic concept in armed competition. He does not diminish the importance of the battles or contacts. Actually, he was emphatic about the primacy of those contacts. Without armed action, an insurgent is just a lawyer or a politician. Without robbery, the thief goes broke. In addition, as far as the State might be concerned, if it does nothing to engage an armed insurgent or a criminal gang physically, the latter may continue to act and grow more powerful until the state appears completely complicit or those other organizations *become* the State. Battle was to Maguire the ultimate military preoccupation, but he noted that it did not have to occur in order for it to be effective. Potential battle, with its results and consequences as perceived in terms of fears or opportunities in the minds of the contending leaders could be enough to determine the results of competition. That psychological quantity is similar to what I define a little further below as *presence*.

I adapt Boulding's reminder of the obvious, along with Maguire's simplification and synthesis of the equation of armed competition, and apply them anew to a reading of the Colombian internal conflict. Internal conflicts generally involve politically motivated guerrillas, profit-seeking armed gangs, vigilantes, separatists, and/or combinations and hybrids of these. Usually, the competitive landscape in a given conflict features more than two such organizations,

which often find they are contending among themselves in addition to fighting against a government. A government that finds it necessary to oppose these elements probably possesses greater military resources, at least at the outset of open hostilities. In Colombia, all of the groups that the government opposes at some point face the necessity to escape physical pursuit. Their success in escaping government pursuit, or for escaping from each other, depends on their being able to get beyond that point where the strength of the pursuing force is no greater than their own, or rather, the pursuing force perceives that it will be going beyond a point at which the risks it takes are imprudently great. What might constitute the critical competitive test is rarely found in a measurement of the overall strength or coercive capacity of a rebellious or criminal organization versus the overall coercive capacity of the government, or of other rivals. The dispositive balance (perhaps the determining balance) is more likely to be found in aggregate strength as measured where the coercive agents of competing organizations meet on the ground in real space. The little parts of organizations -- the platoons, companies, squads, columns, gangs -- have to outdistance their immediate adversaries. They must competently deal with what military theorists have called the culminating point. Whether they are ostensibly in pursuit, trying to escape, or are in contact, all competitors have to sense at what point in space and time they will be taking an imprudent risk to proceed or to remain. The kind of balance-of-strength point that Kenneth Boulding imagined in his single straight-line world can be depicted in the aggregate, or at least approximated. The distances to the multiple points are risk distances and the space beyond the risk distances of the pursuers is the fugitives' sanctuary.

We can weigh coercive power in internal conflicts according to relative internal cost-distances, and more especially by relative risk-distances. Other influences of a geographical nature, such as the source locations of commercial export products (especially extractive or

agricultural); processing locations and transportation routes for these products; and the location of any required labor inputs for the extraction, cultivation, processing, or movement of these products can hardly be overstated. I propose new concepts and definitions, including definitions of sanctuary, remoteness, and even stable governance. I do not build from a presumption or argument favoring geographic determinism, however. Rather, accepting that physical geography is never a stand-alone factor in human decision-making, I find it nevertheless to be a singularly influential constraint on human decision-making, a great fouler of ill-conceived action, and an indispensable factor in the explanation of competitive success or failure in internal armed struggles.

From a recent journalist's appraisal of the Colombian internal war, we read what has come to be a nearly axiomatic causal reasoning regarding their prolonged internal warfare:

> "Colombia in many ways is cursed by its own geography, since its mountainous terrain makes it almost ideal for guerrilla armies to operate in. The country was originally settled by Spanish conquistadores who had their eye on the abundant gold reserves within it, more than they did the logistical problem of setting up a functioning state. The logistical problems are clearly evident in the way that whole towns are often precariously linked up with each other by dirt roads snaking through mountain passes. Consequently, while the presence of government is felt consistently in the cities, out in the country the government authority and any possible relief it can bring to Colombia's poor is left wanting." (Barker, June 2012).

Colombia's mountainous terrain aids anti-government forces or other fugitive elements to elude government agents and units sent to capture or kill them. The same mountains make it

more difficult for governments at all levels to provide basic services for citizens living uphill or in mountain confines. Again, despite the spatial concurrence of escape-favoring terrain with a difficulty in providing centralized social services, there is little by way of logic or evidence implicating poor local economic performance as a cause of the organized violence.

Structure of Dissertation

I begin by defining several terms and surveying relevant Colombian history in order to orient the reader. I then make a brief survey of Colombia's geography in order to highlight those regions to which the term 'remote' has been attached with little debate. I then display the location of the war within Colombia using observations of a variety of phenomena as depicted spatially by Colombians. A striking spatial correlation of Colombian remoteness and costs of the war appears. Nevertheless, I reject the correlation as *modus ponens* proof that Colombia's remoteness induces or allows the conflict. Rather, using a number of anecdotes arranged in commonly recognizable categories, I examine and defend the concept of *risk distance*. The anecdotes suggest the role of risk distance in determining why the war is where it is, as well as the influence of risk distance on competitive outcomes at various scales. Following the anecdotal categories is a series of brief analyses of several of the remote and conflictive regional spaces. The analyses focus less on the violent events and more on the broader interaction of violent organizations and populations within those conflictive regions. Together, the correlations, events and region analyses form an argument for the significance and utility of risk distance as a geographic concept.

Section 2. Methodology

Research activities

I invested the single greatest amount of time to complete this research reading maps of Colombia and of places within and around Colombia. Figure 4 shows perhaps the most consulted map.

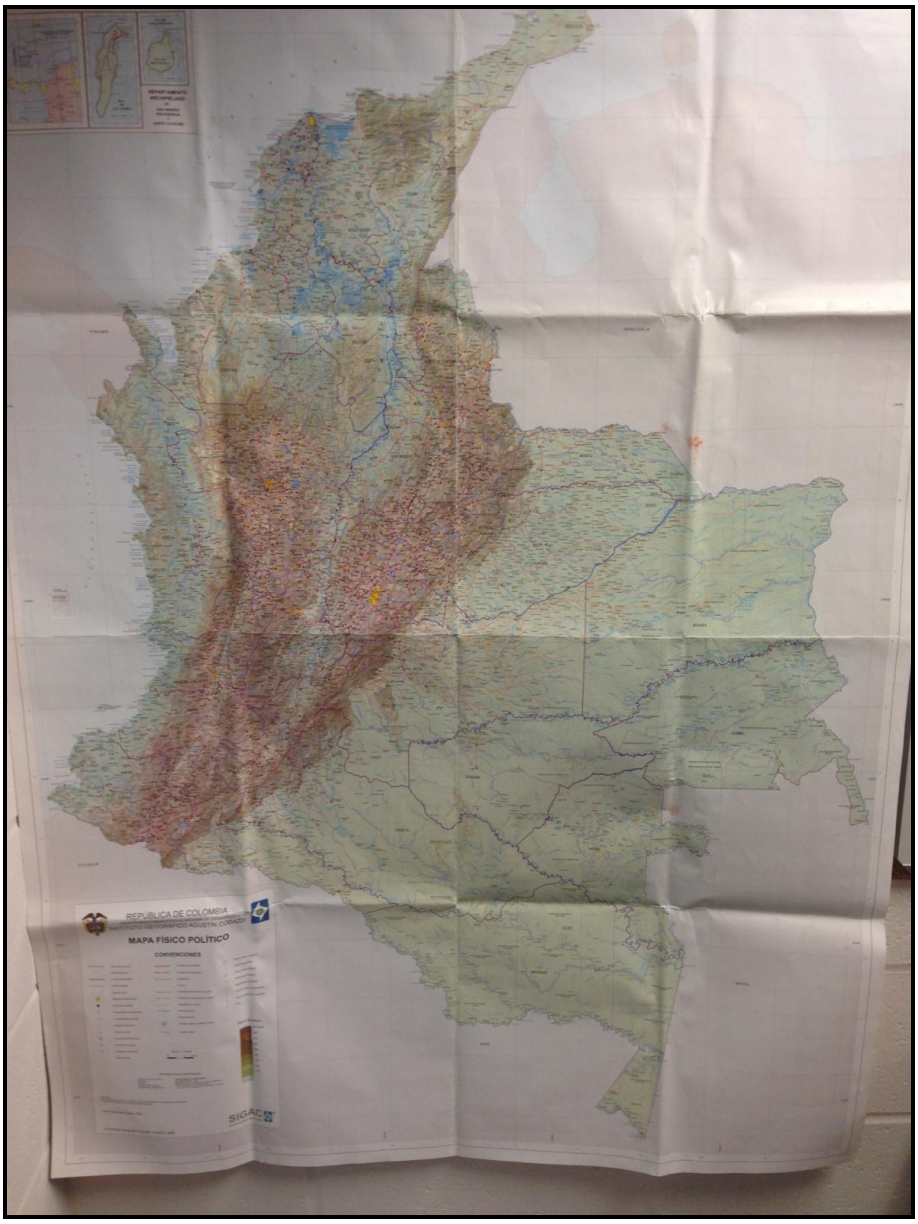


Figure 4: Colombia Wall Map (Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi 2006).

Almost all of the maps at which I looked were locally produced in Colombia by Colombians. In drawing conclusions from the map reading, I tried to remain cognizant of the Colombian analyses that often accompanied them. I read a great many accounts of the conflict, also mostly from Colombians, some of which showed an acute spatial awareness and many of which seemed oblivious to geography.

The next greatest amount of research time I spent in direct travel and observation. I did not visit all the places mentioned in the text. Although Colombia appears to be healing, the physical threat posed by a variety of armed groups still constrains the conduct of direct geographic research. Nevertheless, I traveled in and over most of the departments of Colombia and most of the conflictive regions mentioned in the text, and exploited opportunities to interview military, government, business, academic, opposition leaders, and ex-guerrillas.

Another considerable amount of time I spent simply looking for the locations of places named in reports of key events. Colombia is highly subject to vagaries, variations, multiple uses, local custom, and political competition regarding place names, toponomy being an elaborate and sophisticated Colombian pastime as well as science (IGAC 2009; IGAC 1998; IGAC 1995). Colombians typically identify events (especially violent or forensic events) in public reports by the *municipio* (which I translate as county), but also often by the *vereda* (commonly the next administrative unit below the *municipio*) or a *caserio* (a small grouping of rural residences), but almost as often by a locally named feature such as a canyon, creek or pond. Figure 5 shows Colombia's *municipios*. Often these names skip the next larger administrative unit. For instance, the name of a local feature might include the department name (failing to note the names of the *municipio* and *vereda*). Place names may be associated with some less frequent and less formal *corregimiento* or with a *provincia*, which may be a formal, specialized administrative unit between the *municipio* and the department or a traditional spatial reference. There may also be references to an obsolete or rustic *comarca* or church *parochia* and quite often with informal regions of interest such as 'Montes de Maria', 'Medio Magdalena', or 'Bota Caucana'. Popular writers and journalists often sprinkle their accounts with arcane place references to add a flavor of exactitude and local awareness, but they can detour the reader who

is not directly knowledgeable. Sometimes this imprecision is an author's intent, the place references purposefully left incomplete to provide anonymity to sources. In more exacting governmental reports or academic studies, uncommon administrative categories and localisms generally receive a more useable treatment. Some place names are maddeningly ubiquitous. It seems there is a Rio Sucio or Riosucio (translatable as dirty river) in every township of every county in Colombia. El Tablón (a large board, probably crossing a creek) is popular, as is El Placer (meaning pleasure, probably a reference to an event, not because the place is especially attractive.). In Colombia, Remedio and Cartagena de ... are common, along with many others. In smuggling zones, and more especially, where there has been a long leftist guerrilla presence, we find recurrent references to salient sites or personalities in the pantheon of revolutionary lore, such as Davis, Marquetalia, or Fidel, or of successful past smugglers. In some zones where anti-communist armed groups took over control in recent decades, some of those names changed to new iconography or reverted to colonial or indigenous tradition, leaving cartographers, historians and others with choices that they in turn might wed to their own ideological or academic preferences. All this toponomic wealth of choice makes a time-consuming challenge out of finding the map location of some place referenced in a written report of an event. On the other hand, it also helps test the spatial verity of the reports of many events. One toponomic observation was of particular satisfaction. In many of the geographic areas attracting my interest because of their notoriety as smuggling routes or safe havens, the place names often include Refugio, Santuario, Apartado, Honda, or something similar. These can be translated as Refuge, Sanctuary, Isolated, and Deep (as 'in the woods'), respectively.

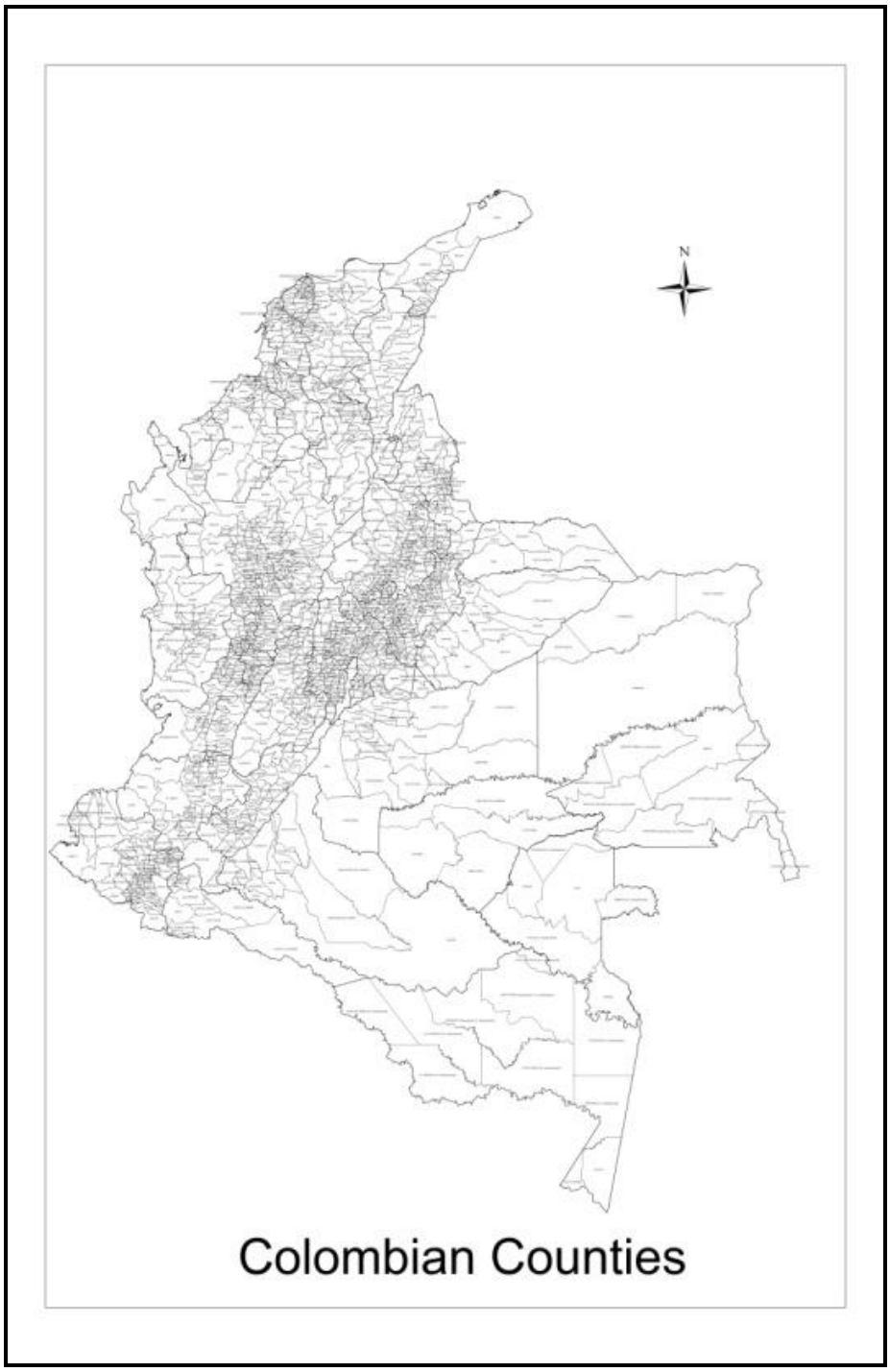


Figure 5: The Colombian Counties (municipios) (SIGOT, 2013).

Another time investment went in to identifying and correlating relevant GIS layers, some of which were available from existing Colombian sources online and some made available only through original research efforts. The attempt to correlate various GIS data layers led naturally

to more map reading. Some evidentiary value may be available through automated GIS experimenting with some correlations, such as transportation remoteness to armed encounters, but such mathematic proof seems unnecessary. In the case of the correlation between landmine use and steeply sloped terrain heading toward crestlines, for instance, this phenomenon evidences itself readily, without applying a statistical technique.

In the six or seven years since beginning research, the on-line availability of maps of all kinds coming out of Colombia and directly related to the conflict has greatly expanded, as is reflected in the number of online map references in the Works Consulted.

The spatial and temporal extent

Several individual years during the conflict are historically salient; 1965 is one, 1985 another, as are 1998, 2002, and 2008. Most of the events upon which the maps are drawn concern the period from 1985 to 2010. In 2010, the election of President Manuel Santos appears to have taken the country on a distinct azimuth as to the internal conflict. As of this writing in mid-2013, the war appears to be moving into a distinctly different, if not final, stage. In obedience to the view that history does not begin or end, I include some descriptive historical lead-up.

As territorial space, Colombia's physical extent has been and continues to be contested politically and intellectually; but for this dissertation, Colombia is, for the most part, as the *Atlas of Colombia* claims it to be. Colombia is divided into 32 *departamentos* (departments) and the next-lower administrative unit of approximately 1,100 *municipios*, which from here forward I will refer to as counties. (See Figure 5). For some cultural and political attributes, the counties are further broken down into *veredas* (townships perhaps). A number of counties also have

within them *corregimientos* that are in some ways autonomous and often en route to becoming their own counties. Within rural counties, police jurisdictions are called *inspecciones*, which may consume other administrative and spatial reference in the context of reports on the conflict. Much available statistical information supports a geographic specificity or resolution at the level of the county, so the default focal scale of the research is at that level. Some of the existing arguments and observations, meanwhile, are oriented toward clusters of counties. At times, commonalities within such clusters relate to the spatial distribution and extent of national parks and other features, which in turn relate to their remoteness. The following quote from the encyclopedic and aptly named book, *Dimensiones territoriales de la guerra y la paz* (*Territorial Dimensions of War and Peace*).

> "the new counties can be classified into four categories: the counties controlled by the State; those controlled by the guerrilla; those managed by paramilitary groups; and those that are in dispute....Between 1991 and 2000, 31 new municipalities were created in the Caribbean region, which creation in greater measure obeyed an interest in increasing the bureaucracy and to strengthen local micro-power. The guerrilla and paramilitary groups act in the greater part of the new counties as power networks, imposing the rules of the game in terms of security, justice and taxes. In the majority of the new counties there is evidence that their creation fundamentally obeyed the need of the armed groups to fix borders and to control important strategic zones as axis of land and river communications between the Caribbean region and the interior of the country." (Montañez, p. 531).

People throughout Colombia feel the emotional effect of violent encounters, but the violent actions themselves do not occur in all locales, in all counties evenly. Even after

decades of diffusion of killing methods and refinements in the methods of extortionary influence of armed groups, the war remains concentrated in a limited number of places.

> "The geographic concentrations where elements of the guerrilla groups have been obligated to seek refuge and where they are generating the greater part of their criminal activity are being watched over by the National Army and Police in departments such as Cauca, Putumayo, Sucre, southern Valle del Cauca, Guajira, and Santander. To wit, the Ministry of Defense informs that between January and May of this year, 50% of FARC terrorist acts were concentrated in 15 counties of 6 departments where 1.1% of the national population lives. Meanwhile, 79% of the 28 actions of the ELN were concentrated in 5 counties in 3 departments where .4% of the national population lives...." (LaTarde.com 2013).

One of the first hypothetical proxies for the "geographic concentrations where elements of the guerrilla groups have been obligated to seek refuge is the extent of the national park system. Figure 6 is a 1979 country map that includes a sketched estimate of the park system bounderies as of that time (Precise boundaries for many of the parks had yet to be surveyed, nor their legal foundations yet solidified.).

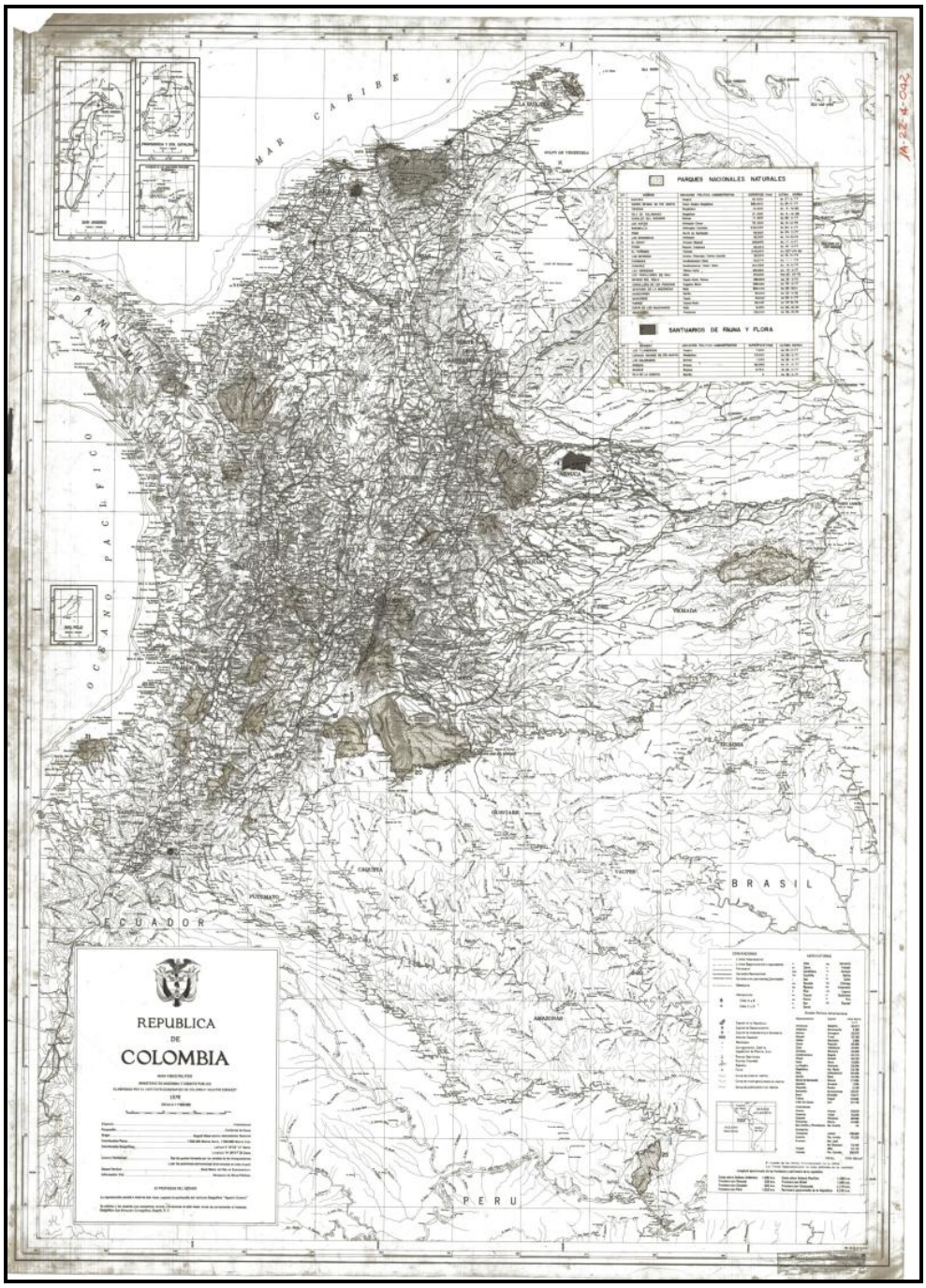


Figure 6: Colombia Map 1979 (Instituto Nacional de Geografía, 1979) The shaded areas are Parques Nacionales Naturales (National Nature Parks) and the more darkly shaded areas are Santuarios de Fauna y Flora (Fauna and Flora Sanctuaries) This is the earliest ma map I found that contained the national park system in more-or-less its current composition.

Defining Key Concepts

Risk Distance

Risk distance is the distance to a perceived, theoretical point in time and space beyond which it would be imprudent, irresponsible or self-destructive to proceed in some activity. The longevity of the two principal armed insurgent groups -- The Army of National Liberation (*Ejército de Liberación Nacional*; or ELN) and the larger Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (*Fuerzas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, or FARC) -- can be attributed to no one factor, and this dissertation does not argue that outcomes in the Colombian war have been predetermined by physical geography. Rather, I assert only that the interaction of the parties, and especially their responses to environmental challenges, have significantly influenced outcomes. That said, physical geography contributes so heavily to the creation of cost and risk distances in Colombia that although physical geography predetermines little, by the same logic it un-determines a great deal. Given that competitive human decisions are so often constrained by the effects that physical geography has on cost and risk distances, the range of potential outcomes is constrained though not pre-ordained. That range is still modifiable, however, by human innovation, most especially those innovations constructed to change cost and risk distances.

I put distance in three categories: Euclidean (unimpeded 'normal' mathematical distance measured in established units such as meters or miles -- sometimes said, 'as the crow flies'); cost or friction; and risk. Geographers are familiar with cost distance, and for most purposes, we measure cost distances as the time and money necessary to move people and things from one location to another. Risk distance is known to military planners as the distance to the *culminating point*, a theoretical point in space and time beyond which a unit runs an imprudent

risk of some kind. Military leaders seek to anticipate risk distance in the context of surviving armed encounters with opponents.

Cost and risk distance are inversely related: Increases in cost distances can shorten the predicted risk distance for military endeavors. For instance, a supposed point of unacceptable risk might be closer to home or sooner in time if extreme weather compelled a unit to carry more water than it would normally need to reach a given location safely. Risk distances shorten as cost distances increase. Meanwhile, the likelihood of a deadly encounter with an armed enemy is itself a factor in the measurement of cost distances (endogeneity). Measuring the relevant cost distances might involve little more than determining the time it takes to travel to the places where a fight might occur, perhaps to and from known guerrilla sanctuaries. Citizens of the same rural zones contemplating travel to a hospital equipped to do a cesarean birth, a court to try a quiet-title action in land, a high school, or a police station will also measure distances according to time and other resources. These dimensions may seem hypothetical and speculative, but were related by Colombians intimately familiar with rural life. As with so much else, with careful hindsight we can see others' mistakes in their measurement of risk distances. If someone suffers a fatally unsuccessful movement, we can say that at the point of their death they had exceeded the risk distance.

Remoteness

Remoteness seems a ubiquitously mentioned quality in Colombian descriptions of their war, in their descriptions of rural poverty, and in many explanations causally tying poverty and the war or remoteness and the war together. One can also find admiring references to Colombian remoteness with expressions of national pride and identity, since remote environments in

Colombia are so often home to curious, unique, antique, or spectacular phenomena including broken terrain, odd weather, flora, fauna, and humans. Remoteness seems to influence competitive outcomes in the internal war, and it is understandable that observers would tie explanations of the conflict to the other geographic phenomena that correlate spatially to the remoteness.

Remoteness is the 'how-far-away-it-is-really' condition produced by an amount of distance. Colombians often define remoteness according to quotidian economic cost distances between rural population centers and some basic public services. One of the lines of effort taken by the Colombian military in recent years has been to involve other government agencies in "whole of government" efforts to decrease the cost distances to basic services. (Centro de Coordinación de Acción Integral, CCAI 2010) Communities are thus made less remote. These efforts have been built upon the argument or supposition that if a local population does not have to travel as far to a gas station, or if it takes less time to travel to a school, court or hospital, then such a population is made less vulnerable to guerrilla or gangster exhortations and proselytizing. Perhaps the Colombian government has decreased the presence of Colombian insurgents in some conflictive locales by reducing the economic remoteness of those locales (Angarita 2006). While efforts to assist rural communities may be worthwhile in and of themselves, I believe the premise that a community's economic remoteness is a central factor in its participation with or vulnerability to guerrilla or gangster presence is misplaced. The fact that there are innumerable economically remote places in Colombia that are not victims or venues of the internal war is a clue. We can attribute the involvement of many rural communities in the conflict to a separate set of factors. That set of factors relates to the communities' remoteness, but is not the remoteness. The relevant factors are geographic conditions that most affect a differential in risks

faced by pursuers versus fugitives in the act of escape. While some of these same factors may affect the practical travel distances experienced by the local population, it is the effect of the geographic factors on risk distance in armed pursuit, not the effect on quotidian economic life, that matters in terms of the vulnerability of the population. Therefore, improvements in those quotidian economic distances, as welcome as such improvement may be, are not likely to have the desired effect, and may even be counterproductive, if they do not change the risk distances of pursuit. They may even provide the guerrilla or gangster organization with convenient services, or unburden those organizations from demands of the local population for assistance. For purposes of understanding the conflict, we must conceptually separate remoteness as it relates to the travel cost distances of quotidian economic life from the risk distances during the existential challenges of armed pursuit and escape.

Presence

By presence, I refer not only to the location of persons, but also to a quality of inspiration. As it pertains to the relationship between armed organizations and individual or collective audiences, there exists a corporeal presence and an incorporeal presence. Guerrilla groups can use a small amount of corporeal presence to create an incorporeal presence, maybe in the form of admiration or hope, but often in the form of fear. In places experiencing organized violence of some kind, the presence of armed groups is not only their physically being in a community or nearby, but a psychological presence they leave behind them or that precedes their arrival. This kind of incorporeal presence can be coaxed, cultivated, and disseminated without much of a corporeal presence. The following is from a renowned Colombian historian.

> "When one talks of 'presence' of this or that actor of the conflict in a 'county', generally it indicates some place removed from the county seat, or better said, inaccessible, even to the most locally familiar. So then, what is 'presence?': that of an encampment (of varying size, placement and equipment) or that of a furtive passing, generally under the cover of night, by some armed band? Moreover, when an illegal armed contingent announces its presence in a small town or inhabited place, or just passes by, they "take" the community by force of arms for hours or exceptionally days. In such cases it is possible that the local inhabitants know approximately where they are camped or where they came from. Nothing more. It is exactly because the "locals" have to keep their affiliations a secret (they sympathize, are neutral, or are opposed to the armed groups, legal or not), the armed groups in turn keep the map of their route secret. Their mobility, as this suggests, unfolds as "corridors" that are really a meticulously arranged string of points of support…" (Palacios, 2012, p. 53) (My translation).

As to the relationship between *presence* and *sanctuary*, it appears that a great deal of time spent by contenders in the Colombian conflict is not in firefights, moving to and from some armed engagement between the FARC and the Army, for instance, or even in escape and pursuit after one of these engagements. It appears that most of the time passed by armed actors is in activities we recognize as mundane if not banal. They look for food, water, sex, entertainment, medical attention, or tend to other chores. If news items revealing the vicissitudes of the guerrilla organizations' leaders are a guide, they spend some amount of their time and that of their underlings in activities intended to make themselves richer. Nevertheless, preparation by guerrillas for safe movement and the improvement of the safety of their sanctuaries seems to be a

central vocational activity when not otherwise occupied. That safety (of movement to sanctuary and of the sanctuary itself) may require efforts by the guerrilla to create a psychological presence in rural communities along the route to the sanctuaries.

A guerrilla might enjoy a distinct advantage in a local contest of presence in a remote community. The guerrilla can make his communications existential. He can explain to the community that while his band is only going to be around physically for a short time (having a face-to-face conversation with a town councilman or holding an organized harangue), the guerrillas are going to stay close enough to reinforce certain intended consequences of their physical presence. The potential return visit is as significant as the current visit. Perhaps conditions warrant a promise to protect the audience from harm, or perhaps the communication must be cruder -- that severe harm will come swiftly if submission is not forthcoming and silence regarding the guerrillas' whereabouts kept. Public expectations or institutional behavioral norms might constrain a government force from making a similar message. Even a gentle government instills some fear, or at least caution, by suggesting that it will eventually serve process to prosecute unacceptable conduct. In Colombia, as most of the country strives in the direction of a more peaceable social environment, the police are becoming accustomed to increased restrictions and attempt to serve warrants for criminal conduct such as 'accessory to conspiracy to rebel.' In other words, an imbalance appears to have been growing in the potential incorporeal presence available to the contenders as the government evolves in a direction to what we like to call the rule of law. In the remote counties indicated as government security priorities, special legal exceptions give police more leeway, that is, a waiver for some of the civilities increasingly demanded in much of the country. There in any case exists an imbalance in which the guerrillas can manifest a far greater ruthlessness.

The imbalance in existential expression gives a competitive advantage to the fugitive over the pursuer in many remote areas. Some remote Colombian towns are simultaneously close to guerrilla sanctuaries and at great cost-distances from a government police or military base. The guerrillas can come to town more easily. Because their survival is in play, the fugitives readily justify their cruelty. Remote space in Colombia, however, has been diminishing in overall geographic extent. The advantage of existential ruthlessness (The capacity to sincerely communicate,"If you reveal to the police which direction we went, we will return and kill you.") appears to be a short-term proposition. The gentler (if ineffectual in the near-term) 'police presence' has the long-term advantage -- what I believe to be the more hopeful residual of physical presence. Perhaps the loss of public popularity of the FARC in Colombia relates to the excesses of the ruthlessly existential form of guerrilla *presencia*.

The roles I just assigned above to negative versus positive presence and short-term versus long-term incorporeal presence -- in which I placed the government authorities as those attempting the incorporeal hope of the rule-of law and the FARC as the threateners of death -- has not been perfectly consistent historically or spatially. The Colombian landscape is hardly a Manichean tabloid, either. The competition over presence has had a dynamic in which both sides have tried various forms of inspiration and both have worked or failed in the context of too many other factors to mention. Since the 1950s there have always been more than two sides to the conflict, with several significant armed organizations entering the competition at one moment or another overwrapping either the FARC or some institution of the government. I perhaps strip away too many nuances of ideological cross- and counter-currents and hybridized familial interests. Still, for the purpose of furthering the theoretical proposition regarding the effect of certain geographical phenomena (rugged terrain, jungle terrain, international borders, commodity

locations, and perhaps others) on a theoretical phenomenon (risk distance), the highlighting of presence is especially valuable. Populations often suffer because of their being the target of presence operations whether those operations had the intended effect or not. This is because the opposing force often cannot, or cannot be bothered, to tell what effect the opponent's presence operation might have had. They simply decide to trump it. I believe the spatial record in Colombia shows that the communities that have suffered the most in terms of grave human rights violations have mostly been guilty of being in the wrong place.

As a purely competitive matter, a force in pursuit will do better to recognize the correlations between physical and incorporeal presence, between the incorporeal presence and protection of movement routes and sanctuaries by fugitive elements, and between presence and risk distances. In this, it becomes apparent why the 'gentler way' of war is often that of position and movement. If a force can truncate its enemy's ability to be physically present, it may be the cleanest check on his greater presence -- on his ability to generate fear.

If sanctuary is conceded to an armed enemy, victory is postponed if not forfeited. Conceding presence can lead to the concession of sanctuary. To allow, say, territorial physical presence at nighttime to go unchallenged, then a great deal of potential incorporeal presence is probably conceded in the process. It is not always possible to avoid this concession and forfeiture; it may be unavoidable in obedience to the honest calculation of relative power. One side just might not be strong enough to shrink its opponents' spaces. This lack of relative strength -- to overcome cost distances and risk distances, has been a significant reason why, when the FARC and other guerrillas organizations began to increase power on a wave of financial windfalls, the government simply did not have the wherewithal to be present everywhere.

Impunity

In most if not all irregular wars, somebody organizes to defy a state, the state being or acting through a government. Defiance can include not paying taxes, refusing to serve in the military, extorting, bribing, kidnapping, murder, theft, trespass, bombing, rape, pilfering, giving aid to foreign enemies, selling things the sale of which is illegal, acting untowardly and otherwise offending in the eyes of the relevant agents of the state. When safe in their defiance, we say these defiant ones enjoy *impunity*, which is to say they are somehow resistant to state punishment. The word carries a negative connotation distinct from its nicer cousin, *immunity*. We gain or convey immunity for many reasons and purposes, usually within an established system of laws. When a person gets away with something they are not supposed to get away with, however, they enjoy impunity. When impunity is provided to members of that 'they' by a defiant leader (who might be a mobster, clergyman, union leader, insurgent, separatist, spymaster, or something else), a fundamental challenge to the state is put in motion. When the state responds (attempting to discipline the transgressors and stop the impunity), but the transgressors resist violently, we might have the beginning of an insurgency. If transgressors can build enough wealth and safe havens to survive for decades and provide impunity to thousands of pepetrator minions, it might be called Colombia.

A powerful organization can grant exemption or protection from punishment in advance of action. Countries in the international system generally claim a thing called *sovereign immunity*, considered a legitimate expression of state power. If a country can grant immunity for future acts of warfare that might be committed in other lands, we might say that country has strategic power to that extent. However, if some organization can grant premeditated impunity

for illegal acts to be committed inside the territory of that same country, we might say that state is not completely healthy or fully sovereign. Although strategically powerful, it might be failing.

Governments regularly abuse sovereign immunity. If a government agent were to perpetrate corruption, or commit any act that most of us consider immoral or normally punishable, and yet is exempted or protected from punishment, we might agree that the operative word is *impunity*, not immunity. Thus, how one labels protection from punishment may depend on whose side one is on.

Impunity has an associated geography. That geography includes the places where the offenses occur, where the offenders go to be safe, and the routes they take to get there. The more competitively valuable places, however, may be those locations where leaders (of whatever institution, group or collective) are able to grant or convey impunity. If there are spaces inside a territory where perpetrators escape government punishment, the government fails to the extent of those spaces and those offenses.

When leaders secure the capacity to grant impunity to their agents, knowing they have the power to absolve whomever they send out to express their dominating will, they have gained power. To progress in their power, they concentrate on the management of anonymity, provide it to their people and their informants, and take it away from their enemies. Thereby exposed, they then take their enemies' wealth, pursue them physically, shut off their routes of escape, close their sanctuaries, and maybe kill them.

Sanctuary

The concept of sanctuary can be broken into three categories, these being: 1) *furtive* or *opaque* sanctuary, 2) *patent*, or *physical* sanctuary, and 3) *governmental* or *legitimatized* sanctuary. By

furtive sanctuary, I mean that the identity or whereabouts of a perpetrator (of acts that some authority would punish) remains unknown to the perpetrator's opponent. Anonymity -- secrecy of identity and whereabouts, and secrecy regarding his or her wealth or other sources of power – protects the perpetrator's impunity. A place provides furtive sanctuary only to the extent that identity and whereabouts remain unrevealed to opponents. In such a place, the physical distances between opponents might be minimal so long as anonymity is preserved. By patent sanctuary, I mean a location or place in which a person or group can enjoy impunity without depending on anonymity. Within the patent sanctuary, a person or group has sufficient territorial control that secrecy of their identity is unnecessary. To create and preserve a patent sanctuary, one must maintain a safe distance from those authorities who would impose some form of punishment on them. Perpetrators achieve the third kind of impunity to the extent they can enter government or become government. If at some point, perpetrators gain sufficient power within an area to punish the would-be punishers, that is, to deny others' impunity within a geographical area, then the perpetrators are well on their way to governance and even sovereignty.

The culminating point mentioned above is a theoretical point which is related to the perception of risk, a perception which is in turn influenced (among many factors) by physical geography. Entrance into the natural forest preserves in Colombia allowed guerrilla elements to reach safe practical distances from pursuing units of the public armed forces. There was little need for anonymity inside those forest preserves, distance providing the safety. However, the same remoteness that provides security from punishment correlates strongly with an absence of local human population. Open demonstration of defiance against government authority is unsatisfying to the revolutionary if there is no audience for the demonstration. Part of the effect in Colombia has been guerrilla preparation (combinations of political indoctrination, threats and

demonstrations, and provision of services such as conflict resolution) of the populated areas between and adjacent to the preserves. It is in these adjacent areas that the ELN and the FARC meld the types of sanctuary. This dissertation, then, especially focuses on some of those Colombian counties (*municipios*) that are adjacent to remote areas of the Colombian nature preserves.

Two Colombian Army officers inspired the theoretical approach I take in this dissertation by suggesting to me that a map of the Colombian national park system could serve as a close proxy for geographic presentation of FARC and ELN guerrilla sanctuaries over time. I consider the term sanctuary to be synonymous with a place of impunity, or perhaps a space of impunity. In other words, a sanctuary, for the purposes of this dissertation, is a geographic area inside of which a person or group cannot be punished by their opponents. That is to say, someone can 'get away' with behavior his or her opponents would punish. The national parks of Colombia are logical places of guerrilla sanctuary from government repression because their designations as parks or their availability for legislative proposal as such, are related to their quotidian remoteness.

Culminating point

The culminating point is a theoretical point in time and space beyond which it would be unwise to proceed with an initiative, such as an offensive, an attack or a pursuit. The term 'culminating point' dates back at least to Carl von Clausewitz, the Napoleonic era, and classic strategy. (Howard and Paret 1976, pp. 528, 566). Aggressive commanders counsel aggressive pursuit because an inferior force that cannot escape can be destroyed. However, if the pursuing force presses beyond its culminating point, the pursued may turn and counterattack, effect an

ambush, or maneuver to cut off the pursuer from the erstwhile pursuer's own line of retreat. Hence, positional, movement warfare revolves in part around the leaders' analyses and intuitions regarding culminating points.

As a matter of after-the-fact military critique, leaders are discredited who purportedly fail to press an opportunity to finish off a weaker force. Some will argue that Meade should have pursued Lee after Gettysburg, for instance. (Center of Military History 1989, p. 253) These critiques are always speculative observations of a victory that might have been greater. On the other hand, when it is clear that a leader did in fact pass that point of too much risk, it is usually because the enemy defeated him, often by counterattack.

Culminating points are especially relevant to escape and pursuit. After the leader of force *A* decides for whatever reason that it is time to break or avoid contact with an enemy force *B* (maybe because he thinks *A* has been or is about to be beaten by *B*), force *B* may press the confrontation in order to prevent *A*'s escape. That is when the pursuit begins. Knowing when to withdraw, and securing a path to do so, is part of the essence of good guerrilla leadership. Knowing whether to pursue is also important, and so the decision to pursue or not pursue is integral to an understanding of the culminating point. The culminating point for a squad in the attack depends in part on the amount of water it carries or if it can be easily resupplied with water. A squad leader would at some point be taking too much risk if he were to make his squad continue to move forward beyond its water supply. In a severely dehydrated state, the fighters might be subject to heatstroke or to an effective counterattack from a well-watered enemy. If this were to happen, if an enemy were to turn and defeat the squad due to its dehydration, we could say that the squad had passed its culminating point.

The distance to the squad's culminating point depends on many other variables. The availability and weight of ammunition and food are other common factors contributing to establish the culminating point. Military expressions like 'fire discipline' and 'rationing' attest to this. The quality of weaponry, training, morale, and leadership also contribute to the amount of time and distance before the squad might reach its culminating point. Transportation options also influence the culminating point. A helicopter, for instance, can change the time-distance equation like few other machines. Finally, and this is no small point, initial location on the ground affects the culminating point.

> "There can be no doubt that Plan Colombia represented a fundamental, positive turning point in the fight against drug trafficking and terrorism, among other reasons because of the improvement and increase in the air fleets of the Military Forces and Police. The air power of the Armed Forces has become the guerrilla's worst nightmare, given that it cannot count, as was occurring in the last years of the twentieth century, on attacking a population and the troops of the Army taking several hours, sometimes days, to arrive, due to the difficulties of the terrain and the anti-personnel mines they planted. Now, with the important fleet of helicopters and combat transport planes, with the most modern characteristics, the Army gets to them in a question of minutes." (Santos 2009, p. 179).

In many situations, the landmine can drastically shorten distance to the culminating point. If a fighter steps on a mine during pursuit of an enemy unit up a mountain trail, not only does the mine immediately weaken the unit by the loss of a soldier, resources will be allocated to caring for and evacuating the wounded soldier, further weakening the unit. The leader will feel he must

take more precautions and move more slowly. Just the fear of landmines reduces a unit's theoretical point in time and space beyond which it seems too risky to proceed.

An army or a guerrilla can design a strategy in such a way as to decrease its own units' risk distances taken together, and to increase the aggregate of its enemies' risk distances. This allows better comparisons of the contributions of various seemingly disparate inputs. For the Colombian Army, acquisition of additional helicopters immediately lengthened the risk distances of many of their pursuit units. The guerrillas had adopted the use of mules in the organization's infancy, learned the use of landmines later on, and determined to do as much community socializing along strategic corridors as resources and safety allowed. The relative increase in the distances to their own units' culminating points, as opposed to the risk distances of their pursuers, provided a common measure of incremental benefit across a disparate range of inputs.

Getting somewhere is not the same as getting back. Aircraft, when combined with faulty planning, can take a unit well beyond its culminating point. The French garrison at Dien Bien Phu in French Indochina is an historical example of a violation of classic principles. The French did not assure that (were they to confront an enemy force with greater strength) their route to sanctuary was secure. When a superior force confronted them, it became clear that the French had placed themselves beyond their culminating point *ab-initio*. This happened partly because they measured comparative strength poorly. Several of the blows absorbed by the Colombian Army during the height of FARC success in the late 1990s (Las Delicias, Billar, Miraflores are the names of a few such blows.) were due to an undervaluing by the Colombian Army of the FARC's ability to marshal combat strength, which led to a series of mini-Dien Bien Phu defeats. The Colombian Army placed units beyond their risk distances, beyond the distance of military

prudence. The hierarchy could not support those units in a timely fashion if confronted by a superior force.

Risk distance is the distance to the culminating point. Thinking in terms of risk distances can aid in understanding why certain places are better for placing outposts or establishing encampments and sanctuaries. Besides the relative advantage of fixed positions, it can also help weigh the reasonableness of an operational strategy and provide a rough measure of relative success.

Successful versus unsuccessful outcomes

We are free to measure success in internal armed struggles on the philosophical plane, in mirror fashion depending on who we deem to be seeking impunity and who we deem to be applying justice by seeking to crack that impunity. The outcome of a physical pursuit can be obvious, perhaps entailing countable injuries, imprisonments or deaths of those trying to evade such fate. Conversely, the outcome may be obvious because the fugitives elude both capture and harm. If only for the temporary purposes of logical traction, I assert, as to physical acts of pursuit, that if the pursuers let the fugitives 'get away', the pursuers are unsuccessful. The fugitive (the pursued) retains impunity to the extent he or she eludes harm or capture. The chase is itself time-consuming, but is not an inherently unsuccessful condition except to the extent that the pursuer denies the fugitive the option of remaining in a place. For the pursuer, chasing without result is failure -- an unsuccessful enterprise. However, the fact that the pursuer forces a rival to move, to be an active, moving fugitive is at least a mild success. The purpose of the pursuer is to deny impunity to the fugitive *in some place*. Inability on the part of a rival to remain in a place is tantamount to their inability to maintain impunity *there*. If the pursuers

allow the pursued to backfill, that is, to return to the same place un-captured and relatively unharmed shows an ephemeral success on the part of the pursuers and a sustainable one on the part of the fugitive.

The Colombian government has measured and asserted success against the various illegal armed groups using statistics that show changes in the rates of kidnappings, assassinations and attacks on key infrastructure. These measures are valid to a degree in that perpetrators are, according to the statistics, getting away with less and less. The perpetrators are less able to perpetrate. Whether or not the perpetrators were 'brought to justice' for past perpetrations, or if acts not covered by the statistics are equally dangerous to the wellbeing of the society, is not answered by such statistics.

If a government can constrict and close the sanctuaries of its rivals, that is, leave no physical, territorial space to which and in which a guerrilla or criminal entity can 'get away', then the government is successful. If an outlaw entity can find, create and maintain territorial space out of the reach of government attempts to punish or sanction members of the outlaw entity, that entity enjoys impunity (or immunity if one is philosophically inclined toward the outlaw) and is successful to that extent.

It is difficult to describe the Colombian conflict in an ideologically indifferent manner. If relating that conflict were confined to the creative overlay of visual GIS files, or to seeking revealing spatial correlations in Colombian maps, the exercise could do a disservice. The tensions and moral compromises experienced by the Colombians require some tolerance of anecdotal description and implication, and regarding moral preference. Colombia is a place whose mortal struggles are as flamboyant as they are complex, and so to ignore them might be its

own narcissism. I try to pay respect to Colombian interpretations of their conflict regardless of how and whether those interpretations are exposed by the maps.

Much of the uniqueness of the effort, and almost all the methodological rigor it might claim, owes to advancements in Geographic Information Sciences and Systems (GIS). Many Colombians have adopted GIS technologies, and they are increasingly likely to include spatial presentations in their observations, explanations and arguments regarding the conflict. I used ArcGIS® for much of the data I presented, and most other map images in the dissertation were themselves products of ArcGIS® or similar software. Many issues exist as to data compatibility or lack of metadata transparency. To the extent possible, I expose these debilitations, along with known inconsistencies and shortcomings in the quality of underlying data on which many of the Colombian map illustrations were made. The principle use of the maps is to demonstrate the location of the war and its spatial correlation with regions that by most definitions are considered remote. There is such an overwhelming consensus as to the location of remote areas and as to the war's location that the metadata issues on that point are perhaps moot. That correlation (between remoteness and the loci of the war) is significant to, but insufficient alone to examine the concept of *risk distance*.

Section 3. The Colombian Conflict in Geographic-Historical Perspective

The following interpretation of Colombian history relates some of the interplay among propositions regarding power that have been based upon or attentive to physical geography and those ideological strains of thought not inspired by physical geography or place identity. The focus is appropriate because the dissertation proposes a theoretical phenomenon (*risk distance*) and the coactions of that phenomenon with certain established physical and non-physical geographic determinants, all in the context of violent human competitive behavior. In other words, I offer this brief interpretation of Colombian history to lend the reader unfamiliar with Colombian history sufficient context to ease reading of the anecdotes and regional analyses offered in support of the theoretical assertions. I offer the historical narative modestly, the history of Colombia being the subject of a daunting range of better informed and better expressed interpretations.

Intellectual currents affecting the spatial distribution of Colombia's conflict

The interrelationship of Colombia's physical environment with human use (or abuse) of that environment has been marked for centuries by differences among inhabitants as to how power should be distributed, both as a matter of political theory and as a matter of material practice. Four intermingling intellectual currents have fed those differences since the arrival of the Spanish in the early 16th century. They are conquest and evangelization, federalism/anti-federalism, European socialism, and gangsterism. Colombians contested the balance between the expression and imposition of individual will on the one hand, and the expression and imposition of collectivized will on the other, throughout their history, and this contest leaves its

mark on the physical environment. In the last several decades, even as technical and organizational innovations promised to ameliorate human argument and its impact, the competition of human resolve became more strident and costly. Although it is perhaps too soon to tell, we may be seeing the influence of what we might recognize as a fifth intellectual current in the form of creative group identity formulation and assertion.

The first conflict-fueling intellectual current, conquest and evangelization, was a straightforward expression of domination, easily understood by both conquered and conqueror: subdue by force, take control of land rights, self-justify and domesticate. Domination and submission were expressed in relation to the natural environment as well as in relation to other peoples. Spanish conquest and evangelizing evolved a need for the Spanish crown to delineate boundaries, to the extent practicable, among conquistadors, and by conquistadors among their lieutenants. As well, the Roman Catholic Church demanded and received great tracts of land for various purposes of the church mission. In the mix, and as part of a notion of ethical stewardship, the Spanish crown and the Catholic Church attempted some ethical and practical limitations regarding the treatment of dominated peoples. These expressions of conscience evolved to manifest themselves by two-dimensional territorial boundaries under such concepts as *resguardos* (communally owned indigenous territories similar to the North American Indian reservation) and *encomiendas* (a territorially delimited system of tribute and obligation). To the domination-submission relationship between (mostly) Spanish immigrants and people of the indigenous tribes, we can add the master-slave relationship inherent in the commercial importation of African Blacks. Meanwhile, resistance to domination would succeed in establishing some compromise boundaries that would survive over time. Among escapee African Blacks a significant number of *palenque* communities arose, *palenque* translating to

English as a community fortified with wooden palisades. Fugitive slaves would site these communities, often organizing them martially for purposes of constant self-defense, in inaccessible areas. In great measure because of the effectiveness of their organization and use of terrain, *Afrodecendiente* (African descendant) communities were soon granted official status, played a significant physical and spiritual role in the independence movement, and accelerated disposal of the institution of slavery in what would become Colombia. Consequences of these courses exist in the still-evolving *Comunidades Negroes* and *Comunidades Indígenas*, communally owned lands tied to named collective, usually tribal, identities. The territorial spaces defined by these remaining borders of territorial dominance, influence and compromise among human identities sometimes coincide with logical ecological regions, usually watersheds, but often they do not, making rational and copacetic exploitation of resources more challenging.

A second intellectual current, accelerating around the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, was of federalism/anti-federalism. This is perhaps the most "Colombian" of the violence-propelling intellectual streams in that it seems to fit both terrain and cultural disposition. Even though it initially drew for its destructive energy on a polarized interpretation of the North American revolutionary experiment, it matched Colombia's exotic geography, giving political meaning to broken terrain. How far from Bogotá can or should the central government hold sway? What is the proper balance between localized and centralized power to tax? Who is to pay for the roads? The civil wars of the 19th century were guided by this question (or by cynical reference to the question in order to clothe simple arrogations) up through at least the disastrous War of the Thousand Days at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. No serious student of Colombian history, of any ideological bent, can separate land ownership issues from violence or from ever-conflicting Colombian schemes to stabilize land ownership rights, or to realign or

redistribute them. Most of these schemes fit into the notion of federalism/anti-federalism because the associated arguments expend most of their energy on the play between geographic distance and varying authority to tax. Place identity, the naming of power according to locale, and the theoretical justification of a superior right to power based the notion of geographic proximity quickly established themselves as essential arguments -- as assumptions.

I characterize the third ideological current as imported class struggle. One can argue that the Colombian *Comuneros* uprising in the mid-to-late 18th century was a harbinger of later class revolt, but it was during Colombia's nineteenth century melee to decide the matter of geographic arrogation that news of European socialism arrived. Perhaps the socialist revolution can trace its heritage to conflicts of squatters against speculators in the late 19th century, to dissidence on haciendas, indigenous rebelliousness and then perhaps to the land invasions of the 1920s and 1930s, or to the modern development of the Black autonomous communities. Many in Colombia today will point back no further than to the assassination in 1948 of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán, populist and socialist, as the birth of the current socialist revolutionary movement. The construction or exploitation of a collective identity -- a concept of membership not based on geographical or place reference – is a difficult task in a country that has not yet urbanized or industrialized. It appears that the federalist/anti-federalist argument remained the more powerful undercurrent during the 19th century and well into the 20th. This is manifest in the character and strength of two political parties, Liberal and Conservative. European socialism did not much influence the platforms, rhetoric or especially the actions of either party until the last half of the 20th century. Voting patterns, and fiercely loyal membership in fighting units of the two parties during the War of the Thousand Days and during the post-WWII *Violencia*, matched local place identities. Local elites, usually great landowners, represented those geographically based

identities. Until recently, the two parties existed as proxies for the propositions that the names of those parties herald, names emblematic of the continuing federalist/anti-federalist tiff. The Liberal would generally invoke the superior logic of local place identity and individual moral authority, while the Conservative would argue the superior claim of a national identity and the moral authority of the central State as guided by the church. Both sides fought over a narrow band of tax arrogations and clientelist land concessions. Only in the second half of the 20th century did the internal violence break open the federalist/anti-federalist container of political debate over which the two traditional political parties had nearly exclusive domain. Socialist arguments partly impelled that violence.

The extent to which class has been a basis for struggle in Colombia is a matter of vigorous polemic debate. There is little questioning that social and economic inequities have contributed to the recruitment potential for violent opposition groups such as the M19, EPL, ELN and the FARC. Even today, however, the notion of fixed classes is hard to maintain under scrutiny even while public arguments to the effect enjoy some resonance. Arguing that Marxism was historically not a significant intellectual current motivating Colombians to violence does not exclude the finding of Marxist arguments for why there was violence. Many qualified intellectuals adopt some measure of class struggle in their presentations of Colombian history (Palacios and Safford, 2002). Some focus more directly on land fights, to include their spatial distribution. Catherine Legrande scrutinized nineteenth and early twentieth century colonization of remote areas in Colombia, and her cautionary advice regarding how to interpret the constant construction of large landholdings in Colombia is proving to be durable and valuable.

> "To consider the expansion of large properties to be a form of labor acquisition contributes to explaining the persistence of the hacienda in Latin American

> countries in the XIX and XX centuries. From this viewpoint, the monopolization of land is not necessarily a colonial inheritance or a manifestation of the value of social prestige of being a *hacendado*. More likely it constitutes a logical response, from the economic point of view, to the problem of labor shortage, which affects the majority of the regions where an increase in exportations presents itself." (Legrande, 2007, p. 137) (My translation from the Spanish).

Various organizations continue to attempt to consolidate their control of agricultural and extractive efforts, particularly in the remote areas highlighted as conflictive. Whether we look at a government program under the auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture, forced expropriations by the AUC (*Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia*, or United Colombian Self Defence, now disbanded) paramilitary guerrillas, or the FARC's enthusiasm for peasant reservation zones, Professor Legrande's commentary enlightens. The business model for commodities appears incompatible with concepts like minimum acreage for family subsistence. Cattle ranching, oil wells or coca fields require labor. Whether or not that labor must be centrally organized and led may still be a question that is up for debate. Not debatable is that in Colombia there are always competitors who want to be the leaders and organizers, and that there is always something valuable to extract or cultivate. Often (as with coca and oil), the extraction locations of the latest commodity to be exploited will be where labor supply is sparse. Thus, the source geography of available labor becomes part of the geography over which armed groups contend.

Traditionally, rural agriculturalists were socially conservative Catholics dependent on and loyal to paternalist dons, who in turn belonged almost invariably to one of the two existing political parties, the Liberals or the Conservatives. Marxist arguments rarely inspired anyone in rural areas (whether subordinate agriculturalist or overlord) to political expression, violent or

otherwise, until late in the 20th century. Left-socialist or Marxist argument succeeded, if at all, when overlaying better-rooted determinants of competition, usually territorial and familial. Right-socialist argument was already embedded in a presumptively accepted system in which the catholic clergy had great influence within government and in which military leaders enjoyed traditional deference. While such a condition might seem to paint the Conservative party as the party of the right, and, through polarizing logic, set the Liberal party as the flag of left-socialism, such logic would be difficult if not spurious. The Liberal party promoted decentralization of power, free ownership of firearms, laissez-faire economic practices, the re-balancing of power toward individuals and voluntary associations, and although the Liberal party harbored anti-clerical sentiment, it could hardly be painted as anti-Catholic. The labels of the Colombian parties cannot be matched to what in the United States is today Democrat and Republican, the Colombian parties being more federalist versus anti-federalist than they were left versus right. The North American ideological battle, which concerned itself with distribution of power in geographic context, was until very recently more influential in Colombia than the European battle which concerned itself with the distribution of power according to class and featured two opposing flavors of centralized statism. In other words, the main current creating the intellectual parameters of political philosophical thought in Colombia has been highly attuned to geography.

Revolutionary writers may then claim that the *Violencia* (a period of hyper violence in the 1950s) was class-revolutionary in nature, and the seedbed of the current crop of Colombia's leftist guerrillas. Arguably the *Violencia* owed still more of its energy to the old federalist/anti-federalist polemic, and to the two-party loyalties reflecting it. Still, after the *Violencia*, the radicalizing effect of socialist revolutionary thinking had increased, spurred by organized efforts at class concientization, foreign intervention, formation of armed wings, and by growing

ideological dissipation and ambivalence within the aging Liberal and Conservative parties. Explicit collaboration between those parties in the late 1950s and 1960s, in what is known as the National Front, served to calm the federalist/anti-federalist polemic on which the *Violencia* had thrived. Creation of the National Front also presented a common target (a single oligarchic concept) against which the new stream of socialist revolutionary organizations could argue their moral purpose and justify violence. Paradoxically, compromise inside and between the most effective competitive identities (Liberal and Conservative parties) in the federalist/anti-federalist contract battle gave the socialist-revolutionary idea an opportunity to sustain itself. European socialism could not find space within the federalist/anti-federalist argument, but when the opposing sides in that argument reconciled and unified, the socialists could set a flag in opposition to the newly badged and unified oligarchy. In this context, and after decades of urbanization, non-geographically focused arguments of class and economic disparity would become stronger, and the geographic parameters of the distribution of power would weaken.

The fourth intellectual (or perhaps counter-intellectual) stream, noxious and currently virulent, is unrepentant gangsterism. The notion is still one of taxation and its avoidance and of changing the balance of individual rights versus those of the government and society. There has long existed within Colombian organized violence an admixture of purely mercenary criminality and self-justifying ideological assertion. Smuggling, moreover, has been a science in Colombia for at least five centuries, and since so much of the success of internal armed resistance groups depends on clandestine routes, the geographic separation of smugglers from revolutionaries has been impossible and a pure separation of their identities always improbable.

Colombian violence today (since the *Violencia* of the 1950s) is not the same as in the past. Not only are many valuable geographic objects more likely to be illegal (coca instead of

coffee), but insidious methods and contraptions, such as widespread kidnapping and the sowing of inexpensive, easily deployed explosives, have had distinct effects on the physical environment and on the shape of spatial involvement in the conflict. Colombian gangster Pablo Escobar, for instance, announced a sincere argument about local territorial identity, representing workers and the downtrodden, but his flamboyant spending also bespoke a volume of insincerities. Maintaining income encouraged justifications for opposing established standards of morality. Within a vicious syndrome of seeking legitimacy and challenging norms, Escobar toyed with establishment politics, himself becoming a congressman, and set about to establish his own taxing authority and tax territories. He ultimately decided to directly challenge the State with violent actions, ordering the detonation within Colombian cities of lethal explosive devices. Thus, the Colombian fight slouched back both to its polarized federalist/anti-federalist roots and to self justification of pure conquest -- all of it territorial and homicidal.

The birthplace of the FARC

The exact birthday of the FARC is fuel for debate. It is generally placed in 1964-65, either when the name was officially announced in Riochiquito, Cauca (See figures 7; 8; and 74, p. 207), a little farther back to the formation of Marquetalia, or even earlier to a schism between the Liberal party leadership and communist revolutionaries in the late 1950s. An additional option has as its location a place called Davis or El Davis (after a river of that name) in Tolima Department. Others will cite the first armed action of the FARC as its effective birth on the national stage, an attack on or '*toma*' (taking) of Inzá in 1965 (see description of the event on p. 196). Others will say the name FARC was not given until the second '*Coordinadora'* (coordinator, or meeting to coordinate, or the group doing the meeting) in Guayabero, Meta.

Together these locations compose the firmament of candidate birthplaces. Many have also served as recent refuge options for leaders of the FARC. The analogy of birth to an organization like the FARC is itself perhaps misleading. In any case, if we were to imagine back toward conception, we could include a number of acts of banditry perpetrated by some of the earliest leaders of the FARC. The geographic revelation or footprint of the FARC's early existence is more precise than that of the Communist Party of Colombia, the PCC, for reasons inherent in the development of insurgent or revolutionary organizations generally. For some historians, histories of the two organizations (PCC and FARC) are intertwined, and so, too, the geographies.

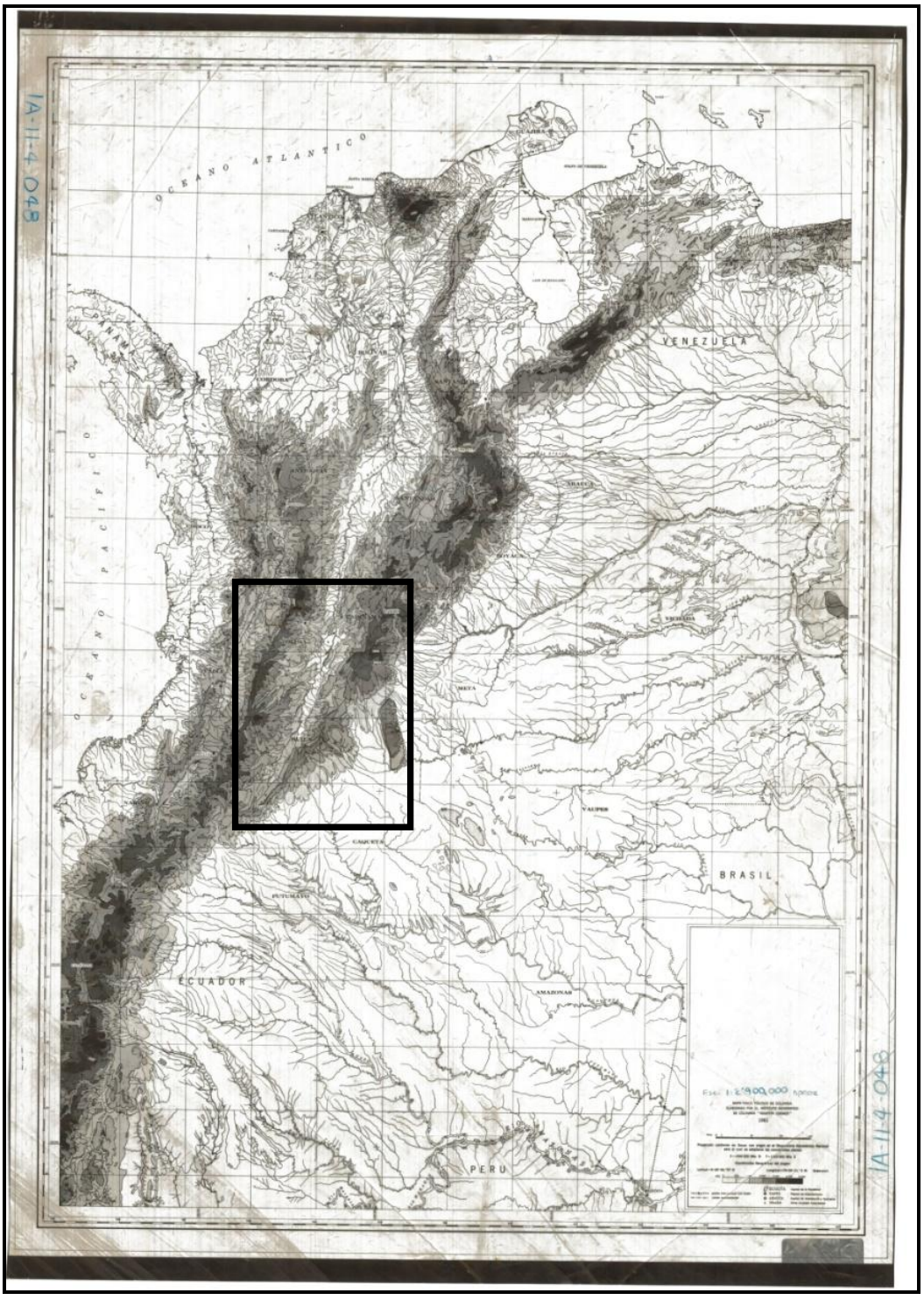
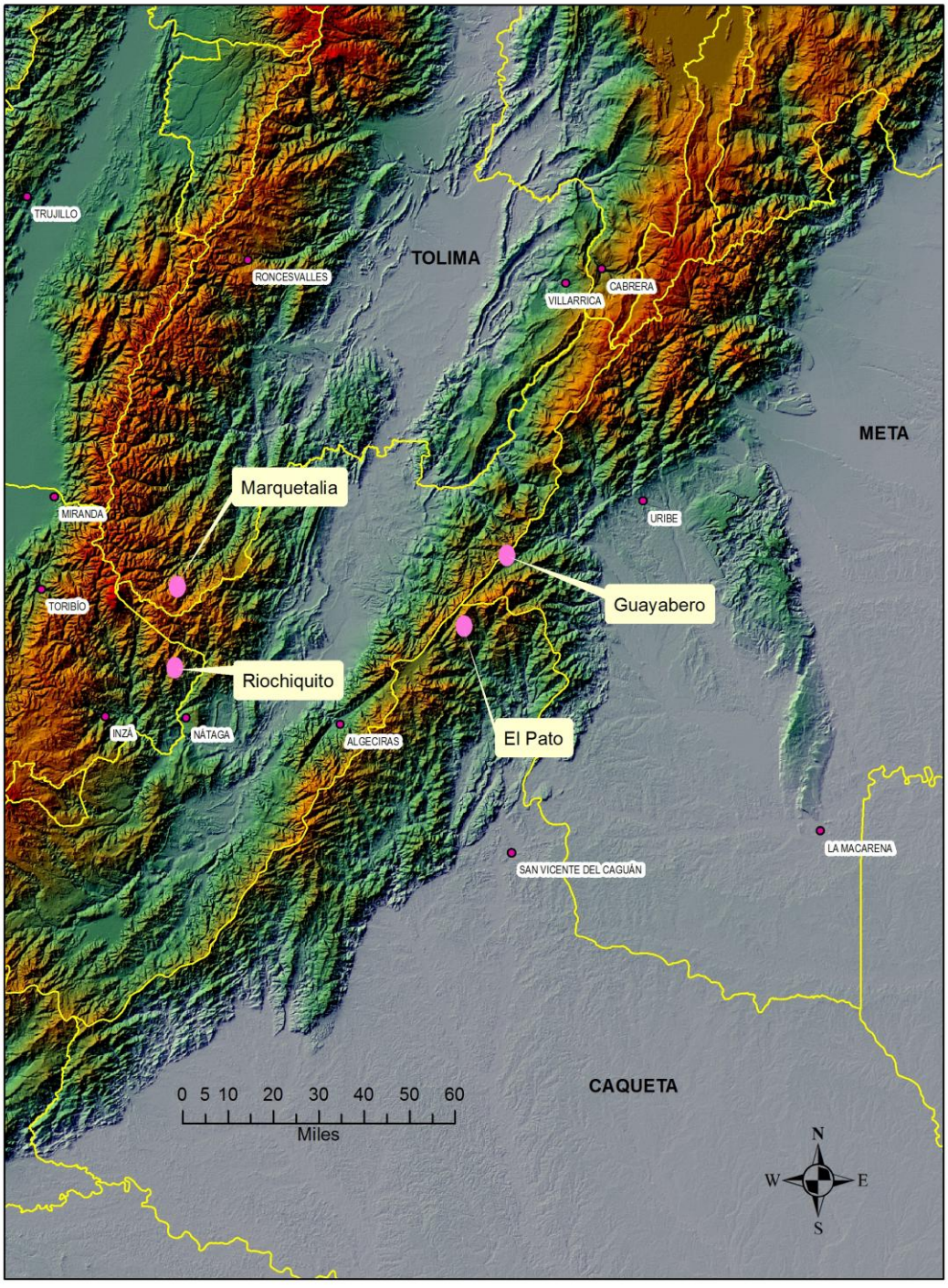


Figure 7: Northern South America Map 1961 (Instituto Nacional de Geografía, 1961). The rectangle highlights the approximate extent of map in Figure 8.



Approximate centers of the early FARC
'Republiquetas Independientes'

Figure 8: Places of reference in the FARC birth legend. Inzá is to the middle-left.

The FARC is in a sense the armed wing of the Communist Party of Colombia (PCC). That is, the PCC may have been the controlling political entity and embrasure of intellectual authorship and control of the FARC (Mackenzie, p. *25*). That description of the relationship is overly simple, however. (Palacios 2012; Mackenzie 2007) There has been a strong overlap of persons in the leadership nuclei of the two, it was through the PCC that the FARC received early support and guidance, and the FARC has been almost if not entirely obedient to the political and geopolitical dictates of the PCC. Of course, as with other revolutionary movements, perhaps especially in Latin America, a number of internal frictions and disagreements have occurred and external factors shifted the balance of autonomy and influence within and among the members. Especially after the fall of the Soviet Union, we might reasonably conclude that the PCC lost control over a growing FARC. To say this without qualifications would, however, be to deny the dual participation of memberships and the role of the party as nucleus for ideological leadership and discipline. At any rate, for the purposes of this dissertation, we can say that the FARC is the armed wing of the PCC or that the PCC is a political wing of the FARC without inconsistency. The geographic placement of members of the FARC might be somewhat distinct from that of the PCC because the FARC attacks and retreats in a different way and in different spaces than does the PCC. It is useful nevertheless, for background and because of other mentions of the PCC in the literature, to note that the PCC is a key organizational, geopolitical link between and overlap with the FARC in international organizations and foreign countries. Since the 1920s, the PCC was a subordinate of Soviet structure. This fact could not help but influence the physical deployment of the FARC. For instance, sincc the early 1960s some lines of supply and medical evacuation would connect with Cuba. In addition, Russian revolutionary theory may have influenced early military decisions. "That conditions within the country were not yet mature

enough for this type of struggle (communist revolutionary) seemed to prove itself when they tried to set up in Quindío and were cut to pieces." (Palacios and Safford 647) (my translation). I believe that a look at the map will tell us that while a great many socio-political factors doubtless weighed on the FARC's prospects, also influential is the proximity of Quindío Department to Tolima Department and the remote redoubt areas within the latter. Quindío is on the western slope of the Cordillera Central, on the other side of the crest from the legendary birthing places of the FARC. Quindío is also one of the old coffee growing areas, its capital Armenia forming a part of the 'coffee axis.' It is an area relatively developed in terms of road and telecommunications networks, and in population dispersion. Places within Quindío are not nearly as remote from governmental coercive authority as places like El Davis in southern Tolima Department. A favorable balance of risk distances was probably the fundamental geographic condition that the FARC founders could not find or create in Quindío, not revolutionary inspiration. In any case, escape routes of the proto-FARC from any *tomas* they might attempt in Quindío would have led them uphill to the east toward sanctuary in Tolima. Chasing the FARC from base locations in Quindío uphill toward the east would be (was) too costly for the government. The government could not catch the fugitive elements of the guerrillas in sufficient numbers to eliminate them. The FARC could not muster enough fighters or materiel from within their uphill sanctuaries to allow them to overcome the inherent risks of being overtaken within Quindío. The cost distances of going down into Quindío were too high and the risk distances too short. Such were the geographic facts facing the would-be revolutionaries, whether Quindío was more appropriate ideologically or not. The matching inability of the government to mount from within Quindío sufficient strength to pursue going uphill meant that the guerrillas could survive, waiting such a time when conditions in the country

changed or their own strength increased. I surmise that the socio-economic conditions within the country as a whole never really became favorable for a communist style revolution -- of whatever subtype imagined by communist party leaders. FARC power, on the other hand, did increase substantially over time, especially with the explosion of illicit drug funding. The FARC came to hold a comparative advantage within the illicit drug industry because of its physical control over suitable coca growing terrain, much of which lies to the east of the Cordillera Oriental (eastern mountain range). The FARC also developed an energetic and thoughtful approach to predatory entrepreneurship, to include the routinization of kidnapping. Not surprisingly, the drug trade obeyed many of the same laws imposed by physical geography on pursuit and escape. Pursuits mounted by formal authorities pushed many aspects of the coca industry (processing laboratories, warehouses, transportation hubs) into increasingly remote areas, remote areas that overlapped FARC routes and sanctuaries.

> "There isn't the slightest doubt that the increase in the rebel phenomenon coincides with the growth of drug trafficking in our country. Just one figure would be enough to demonstrate it. In 1982, the main armed movement, the Farc, had nearly a thousand men and nine armed fronts in the entire country. At the present time, twenty years later, mostly as a result of their resources from drug trafficking, this rebel group has nearly 20 thousand men, that is, it has multiplied by 20, and it has over one hundred armed structures, urban as well as rural." (Guzmán and Muñoz, 2004, 48 citing Carlos Rangel).

One might argue that Mr. Rangel was asserting a correlation as being a causal relationship, when it could actually have been some other factor, such as a rise in revolutionary consciousness or a deepening of socio-economic suffering, increase in perceived relative depravation or an

overreaching intensification of coercive authoritarianism by an increasingly oppressive oligarchy. Those latter arguments, however, can call on no statistical witness. One might also argue that the FARC had gained new leadership, but that is also not borne out by any revealed data. That the FARC learned by opportunity and necessity to be aggressive armed commodity industrialists is the only answer that satisfies observation. It is a conclusion that, if it does not enjoy a consensus among observers, enjoys as close to a consensus as one can hope for. For the purposes of this dissertation, I take Rangel's observation as a conditional truth -- that the FARC gained power in accordance with its transformation into a drug enterprise and the agility of its leadership to translate drug profits into war-making infrastructure. The assertion is relevant to this dissertation in that the physical geography of illicit drugs, and especially cocaine, frames the spatial expansion of FARC control and their fortunes in related predatory activities. It may also frame the relative success of the government in responding to the FARC, the decline of FARC power after 2002, and current FARC strategies at ongoing peace negotiations. That is to say, through simple spatial analysis we can visualize the opportunity of logistical fortune that presented itself to the FARC, the way in which the geography of the illicit drug enterprise, especially of cocaine, shaped FARC military actions and prospects inside Colombia and perhaps how coca-related spatial conditioning influenced the FARC's weakening. In turn, the influence that cocaine geography has had on FARC prospects can be understood through the lens of the loss of power gradient and the dynamic of changing risk in the interplay of small armed units involved in death chases.

> "Not only Tirofijo's men feed their war machine with the rich dividends of narcotics trafficking. Not even the ELN escapes from this cancer of modern societies and much less so the so-called Self-Defense groups, incorrectly called

> «paramilitary groups» in Colombia. The majority of the members of these illegal organizations- in a covered and deliberate way- are based in areas where coca, opium poppy and marihuana plants flourish. Their location explains to a large extent the constant fighting between the illegal armed groups. Territorial control, which guarantees them control over large tracts of land with illegal crops, is the ultimate objective of the blocs, fronts and companies. In this sense, the massacres, forced displacement of peasants and other violations are part of a calculated strategy to repopulate those areas with either guerrillas or self-defense forces, who seek cheap labor to fill their armies of coca-pickers and lumberjacks." (Guzmán and Muñoz, 10)

Course of Colombian violence in recent decades

Four historic catalytic currents conducive to violence were listed above: conquest and evangelization, federalism and anti-federalism, revolutionary socialism, and gangsterism. These currents continued to influence the course and intensity of Colombian violence after 1985, but more specific determinants can be identified. The period from 1985 to 2010 can be divided roughly into three segments. The first was a period of depressed national confidence and political reordering in the wake of extreme challenges to the state; the second was a period of public reflection and effort at negotiation in the immediate aftermath of the Soviet era, and the third was a period of widespread commitment to gaining a physical victory over the violent opposition groups.

In November, 1985, one of the leftist revolutionary guerrilla organizations, the now-defunct M-19, took control of the Colombian Supreme Court Building in Bogotá. An assault to

retake the building by the Colombian army ensued almost immediately. Flames soon engulfed and reduced the court building. Eleven of the court justices and apparently all the M19 members died, probably murdered by the M19 guerrillas. The seminal event, (along with a nearly concurrent major natural disaster, a lahar that buried the town of Armero) catalyzed public efforts to reform the nation's fundamental laws. The result was the 1991 constitution, which provided for some of the changes, at least in principle, that the Colombian left had for decades demanded. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union collapsed, and with it much of the international support to the violent left. Ideologically and geopolitically motivated support from the Soviet Union and satellite countries dried up. The financial part of that support was soon more than replaced by drug money. By the middle of the 1990s, the FARC had grown in power and military confidence on the back of its decision to tie its logistic health to the coca agro-industry.

The survival and expansion of the FARC in spite of the Cold War collapse of its paternal Marxist support can be seen not just in political and economic terms, but geographical. The guerrilla, along with much of the international diplomatic community pressed the government and society of Colombia to make concessions, and that process, exemplified by the 1991 constitution, undermined the guerrilla argument for armed revolution. The FARC had always been a rural movement, but in the quarter century since its founding, Colombia had experienced rapid urbanization, while the FARC had made few inroads as an urban insurgency. Instead, illicit drug trafficking organizations had achieved control of smuggling routes in and through the urban areas. In rural areas, however, and especially in more remote areas, coca and heroin poppy cultivation was in the midst of great increase within Colombian territory. This was due, in part, to successful counternarcotics efforts in neighboring countries, particularly Peru. The FARC found itself to have a clear military advantage over the drug trafficking organizations in rural

areas where the drug organizations were establishing source cultivations and clandestine laboratories. So the geographic shape of the illicit drug trade overlaid areas where the FARC had unchallenged coercive control of clandestine routes. The decision to exert pressure on the drug trade not only provided a financial windfall, it changed the nature of FARC thinking. Now the federalist/anti-federalist question, or something like it, made its way into the FARC's own narrative. Now it would be about local authority and control, the creation of autonomous zones and territories, the creation of local identities, a preference for the *counties* and the distribution of national wealth to them. The basic nature of Colombian territoriality would return to dominate the FARC's argument. Hybridizing its nature with that of the illicit drug trafficking organizations with which it now dealt, the new FARC had far more financial strength but continually expended revolutionary purity, a degradation which in turn subtracted greatly from public emotional and therefore political strength in and out of Colombia.

In May 1998, Andrés Pastrana won the Colombian presidential election on a platform of furthering a negotiated peace settlement with the major guerrilla groups. Carrying out his campaign pledge, and with the initial support of the majority of voting Colombians, President Pastrana conceded to the FARC a 42,000 square kilometer zone in the middle of the country (which became known in Colombia as the *Despeje*) from which he removed all government forces. (Figure 9; Figure 46, p. 142) Perhaps this concession was a gesture of good faith intended to provide confidence to the guerrilla leadership and so underpin a process of negotiations. Perhaps the government made the concession because it seemed necessary to trade space for time. By late 2001, in any case, it had become clear that the FARC was not approaching the peace process with intent to cede anything in return -- in any sphere. The event commonly cited as the last straw was an airline hijacking and kidnapping of its passengers on

February 20, 2002. That evening President Pastrana ordered the Colombian Army to retake the demilitarized zone and reinitiate offensive operations against the guerrilla.

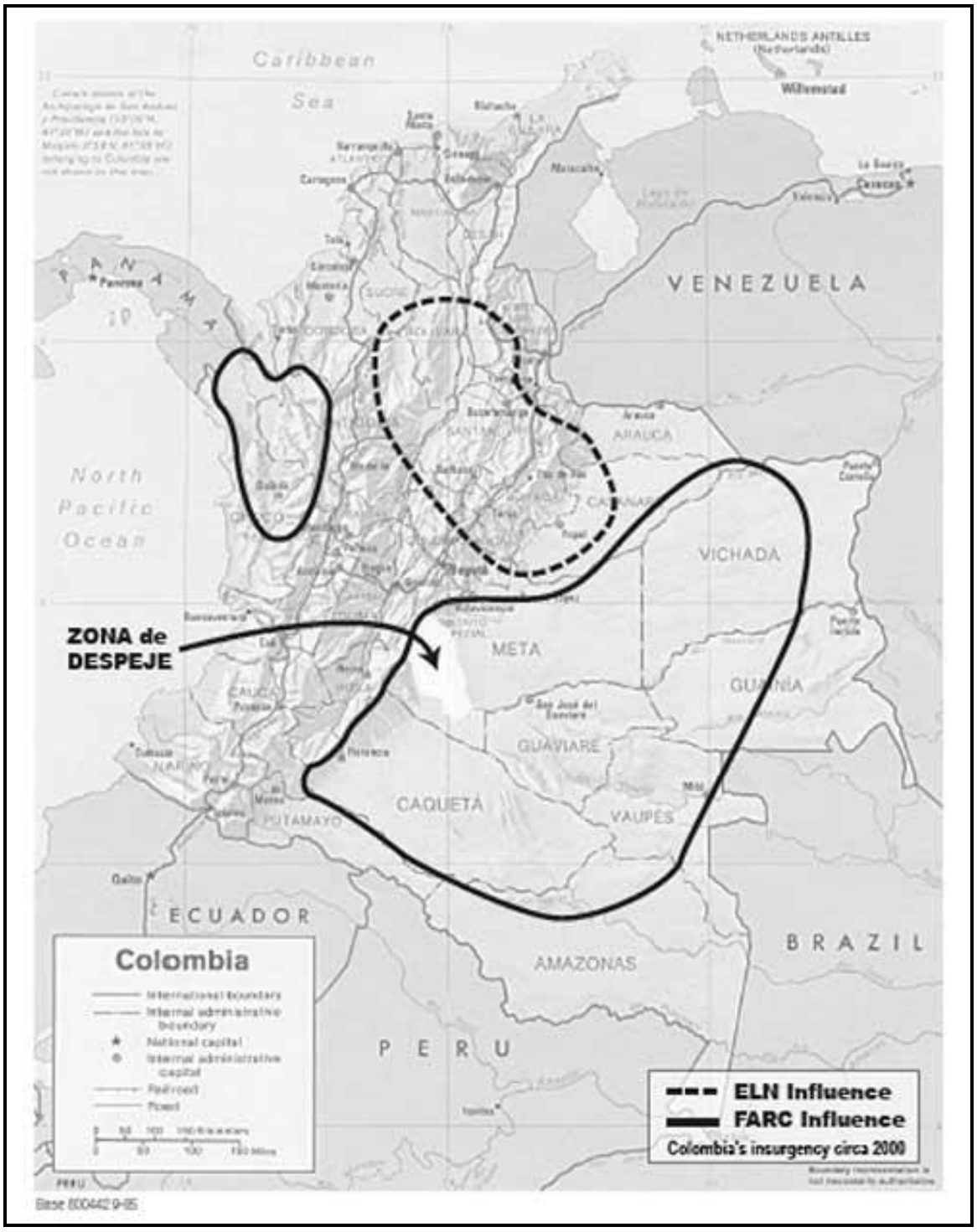


Figure 9:The Despeje Zone with an estimate of the FARC and ELN influence areas circa 2000 according to US author Thomas Marks.(Marks March/April 2002).

In the presidential campaign for the 2002 elections, Álvaro Uribe Vélez, whose father had been killed by the FARC, ran as an 'Independent Liberal' (not as candidate of his former

party) on a campaign diametrically opposite that of President Pastrana, vowing to subdue the FARC and ELN by force of arms. He was overwhelmingly elected in May 2002. Much of the reason for his victory is attributable to disillusionment of the Colombian electorate with the peace process. His victory and subsequent high public favorability ratings seem to owe in part to psychological release of potential admirers from ancient loyalties toward one or the other party. That he did not run as a Liberal or Conservative seems to have subtracted a great deal from that historic polarization, bringing to the forefront the relationship of the government to the insurgents. His new labeling diffused opposition, and simultaneously drove opposition political opportunity into an almost necessarily anti-Uribe identity. In turn, pro-Uribe publicists painted that anti-Uribe identity as tantamount to being pro-FARC. While this is a simplification of the political-electoral formula, it is generally valid as a description of the Colombian political polemic through 2010. Hence, in the 2010 elections, Juan Manuel Santos won in a landslide on the promise to continue the Uribe posture of defeating the guerrillas militarily. By the time of the presidential inauguration of 2010, the political philosophical content had devolved away from the federalist versus anti-federalist, or the merits or defects of socialism, or the drug war. The political contest was more narrowly about how to deal with the FARC as a coercive force.

The above perspective on the Colombian conflict may not be altogether correct, but it is not altogether wrong. Various commentaries, opinions, assertions, and hypotheses about the war -- regarding the war's causes and the ethics of behavior in prosecuting the war -- will be considered tangentially within the text, but are not the focus of this dissertation. Herein the focus is on the geographic influences on manifestations of competitive territorial behavior, which, at its roots, seems very Colombian.

The year 1985 was pivotal in Colombia, maybe the year that the nation of modern Colombia was born. Five major events seem to have comingled their public psychological effect to take the Colombian electorate and political elite in new directions, to open political space for some organizations, and to close it for others. In 1985, the official registration of a legal leftist political party, the Unión Patriótica, the desired metamorphosis of the M19, changed the electoral landscape even though it would never do well at the polls. That year, the same M19 occupied the Colombian Supreme Court Building, which burned down during the ensuing melee. (Pardo 2004, p. 485; Mackenzie 2007, p. 410) One of the worst natural disasters in human history occurred in Armero, Tolima; and for the first time, county leaders were elected instead of appointed. Also in 1985, a strange, out-of-scale massacre took place at one of the epicenters of Colombian violence, Tacueyó, Cauca. (Cuesta 2002) The five major events (registration of the Unión Patriótica political party, burning of the Supreme Court building, the mudslide at Armero, local election of mayors, and the Tacueyó massacre), each of which might alone have defined a year, together created an ambivalent sense of national doubt combined with a sense of mission and of possibility.

The holocaust at the Palace of Justice seemed to rivet national attention on a need to deal in some way with the national crisis, while the Armero disaster piqued public suspicion regarding the preparedness of the government to handle major crises. Decentralization of political decision-making and the movement of resources toward the counties increased local political participation and interest, and opened opportunities for some organizations to take over legal political reins in select areas of the country where before they could not. Especially vulnerable to armed political proselytizing were remote areas where armed guerrillas were habitually present. Registration of the M19 seemed to open a broad path for political

compromise and negotiation with the guerrillas, while the Tacueyó massacre induced public doubt regarding the legitimacy of the guerrillas as a political actor.

In a span of weeks, many of the psychological and spatial trends ongoing in Colombia got an accelerating jolt by uncommon events. Together those five events gave the FARC political advantage in some of the geographical areas where it was strongest, and simultaneously spurred the FARC leaders' dedication to armed processes over diplomatic ones. The events seem to have had an opposite effect on the population at large, which for the next decade and a half would seek peace accords, liberalize the country's basic laws and continue to urbanize.

Continuities and discontinuities

The right-hand map in Figure 10 shows the locations of almost all battles during the War of the Thousand Days, which took place in Colombia around the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. (Riascos 1949). The other map shows a plot of landmine fields as of about 2008. (Observatorio de Minas Antipersonales 2002). Where there is a landmine, a violent actor was at an exact location with mortally violent intent. If one is attempting to locate exactly where a war marks its intensity, then landmine distribution is a solid clue. Comparing the battle locations of the War of the Thousand Days to approximate landmine distribution of a century later, we see some overlap, but also some very clear distinction in the overall spatial extent of the two periods of internal conflict. The comparison invites questions regarding historical continuities and discontinuities that might help explain the spatial differences that a century would make. The questions and reasonable answers to them are consistent with the overall observation that in Colombia, at least, geographic factors other than generalized socio-economic performance or social justice have been determinant of the course if not impetus of internal conflict.

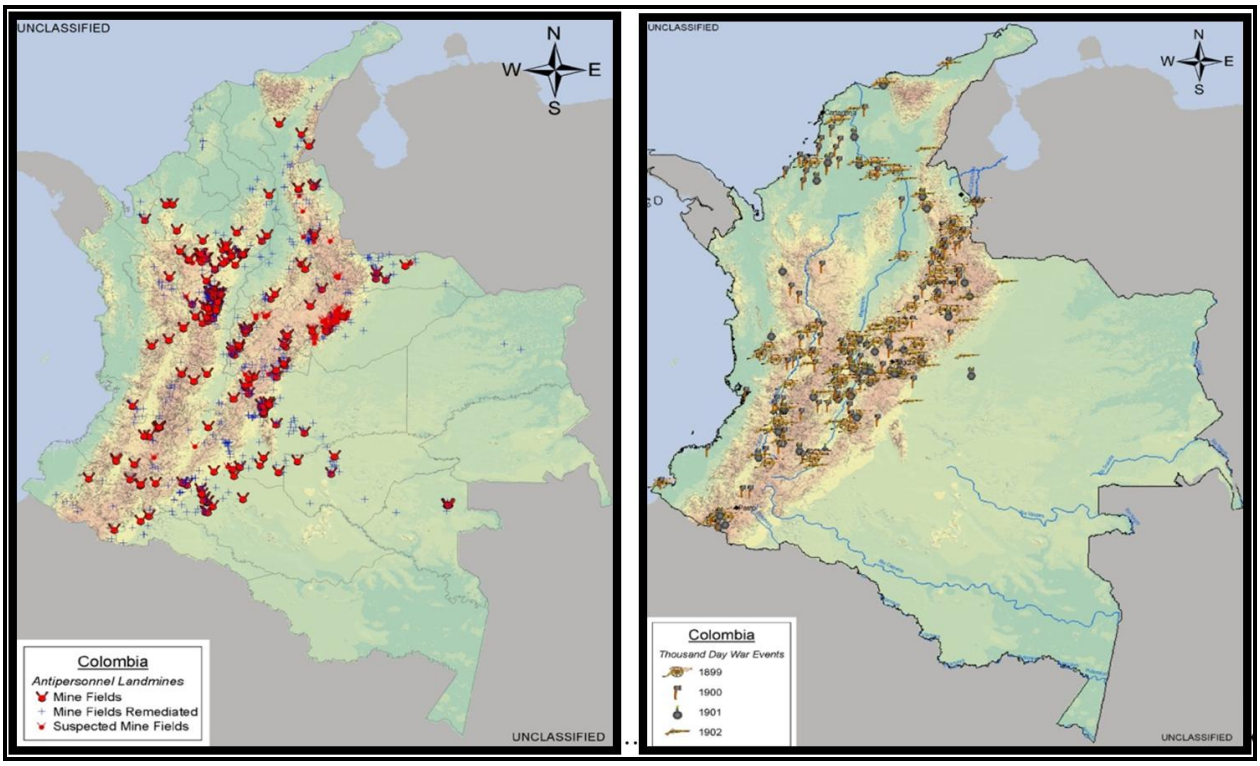


Figure 10: On the left, landmine fields circa 2003. (Observatorio de Minas 2002) (IGAC) compared to, on the right, battles during the War of the Thousand Days. (Riascos 1949).

Amnesties and negotiations as continuity

In the War of the Thousand Days, and as a more generalized habit of warfare in the 19th century, the Liberal and Conservative armies paroled and amnestied captured prisoners. After the initial battles early in that war, the activities of both armies devolved to guerrilla practices and encounters. (Demarest, Spring, 2001). As those practices of the Liberal and Conservative guerrilla bands descended more and more into indecency and at times depravity, it became harder and harder to enforce amnesties, the desire for vengeance constantly overcoming intentions to live and let live. The intention to seek negotiated peace and to establish an official framework of forgiveness, mixed with increasingly unforgivable behaviors and intensifying vengefulness, marked the organized violence of the 1950's and the current period of conflict.

Steven Dudley (Dudley 2006) traces the tragic history of the *Unión Patriótica* political party, formed by amnestied members of the M19 guerrilla. That amnesty was granted as an explicit continuity in Colombian conflict, and, sadly, the result included the eventual murders of many of the amnestied. The identies of some perpetrators has been established, although the majority have gone unpunished. The motives and collective identities of the murderers is as confused as might be expected and continues a fierce debate. Guerrillas of the FARC and ELN killed many ex-M19 and Unión Patriótica members, considering their former comrades as traitors. Anti-communist paramilitary guerrillas killed many others, seeking to end the left's electoral life in its infancy. Consistent with Colombia's history of political violence, most perpetrators have enjoyed impunity.

The Álvaro Uribe government had greater success in amnestying and demobilizing the paramilitary AUC than it did the FARC guerrillas. We can attribute this success in part to ties between elements of the AUC leadership and some Colombian military leaders, as well as to a general ideological concert of the AUC leadership with that of the government. As the behavior of the AUC became decreasingly tolerable, international diplomatic pressures and internal political liability influenced the Colombian government to assert more control over the AUC. Well over thirty thousand paramilitaries surrendered themselves under the amnesty, as did many thousand left-wing guerrillas. The government had estimated that the AUC counted on no more than fourteen thousand members at its height. The oversubscription of demobilization acceptants was perhaps due in part to the benefits of the demobilization programs. The numerous problems involved in the reintegration of those young men into civility aside, most Colombians seem to agree that the amnesty programs have been better than the alternative.

In 1991, Colombians received a new national constitution. It addressed within its paragraphs many of the grievances that the communist guerrillas had for years used as justifications for their violent endeavor. The ideological left, and the M19, had won concessions. The government reached a peace agreement with the M19 in which many of the M19 guerrillas renounced their use of weapons and took on the structure and trappings of a political party within the electoral system. (Dudley 2006). The M19 suffered many assassinations and widespread rejection at the polls, finally becoming unable to muster minimum numbers of petitions to appear on ballots. The FARC inherited the more committed revolutionaries from the ranks and hierarchy of the M19, and then participated in retribution killings of many of the M19 politicians whom the FARC leaders considered treasonous.

Viciousness as continuity

La Vorágine (The Whirlwind) is a landmark of Colombian literature, written in 1924 by Jose Rivera. (Cormack McCarthy's *No Country for Old Men* and its movie adaptation give a similar style and concept set, including fate, honor, violence and the interweaving of these with the surrounding natural environment, not to mention the tolerance of violence. That the geographic backdrop is exactly not the jungle is of no matter.) It is no less than the prototype of an entire genre of 20th century Latin-American fiction called the *novela de la selva* (jungle novel). On its surface, Rivera's work (both as plot and literary phenomenon) supports an assumption that Colombian violence is somehow embedded in the society's fabric. Evoking *La Vorágine*, some Colombians will claim the 1924 world decried by Rivera has gone unaltered; that Rivera's accusation is absolutely current and one need only substitute coca for rubber. *La Vorágine* delivers violence as an omnipresent human contribution to the natural order. In other

words, Colombians interweave human experience with the surrounding world, and involve the spiritual world as well. Magical Realism is the name given to the broader artistic genre into which this expression falls. Another Colombian novelist, Alvaro Valencia Tovar, who is also a retired Colombian Army general and news columnist, hews to the same interpretation (Tovar 1997). One of the most consistently insightful commentators on Colombia's agonies (and perhaps the most widely known and respected living military officer in Latin America), Valencia maintains that Colombian society needs to be re-educated for non-violence. It appears, then, that Colombians at diverse points in the professional and ideological firmament accede to if not champion the idea that Colombia is culturally violent. The same holds for other disciplines of Colombian art. Fernando Botero, the most famous Colombian plastic artist, has dedicated much of his later works to the subject of Colombia's violent nature. In cinematic art, Colombian screenwriters and artists have become associated internationally as masters of a whole genre dealing with the hyper-violence and existential desperation of drug-trafficking, corruption and poverty. All in all, Colombia's art seems to indict the culture. The political science follows suit. If a person were to de-shelve Colombian *non-fiction* texts on the subject of violent culture currently in a Bogotá bookstore, that person would be unlikely to have enough cash on hand to buy them all or enough strength to carry them away. The existence of a Colombian academic specialty called *violentología* filled by *violentólogos* of every ideological stripe itself might hint to a society prepossessed by the idea of violent culture.

These elements of artistic and academic reflection are testimony from talented Colombians to the existence of a violent culture, and highlight how prideful is my rejection of the idea. Math seems to aid the rejection, however. The same bookstore browser, if allowed to double-count overlapping book topics, would likely find more titles on territoriality, land use,

and property ownership than on violence. With titles like *Dimensiones territoriales de la Guerra y la paz*; *Estado* (Montañez, Gustavo, et al. 2002); *Sociedad y Ordenamiento Territorial en Colombia* (Borja 2000); or *Territorio y Cultura: Territorios de Conflicto & Cambio Socio-Cultural* (Grupo de Investigación 2001) the literature on Colombian violence is tied to physical objects of contention, not just to human foible. Therein lies a foundation for an argument against the notion of a culture of violence. Violent behavioral habits exist, but they matter in the presence or absence of certain characteristics of the surrounding physical, political, administrative and economic geography, much of which can be changed. This is important because the violence-as-culture trope can serve as an excuse, justification or reason for pessimism. Solutions for long-term peace can be achieved by changing the geography of human competition. Attempting to change the internal environment of human behavioral predisposition may be an attractive, but unproductive romance.

Commodities as continuity and discontinuity

Colombia may present some continuity of violent cultural habit, but observation of Colombian geography and history shows something else as well. Over time, Colombian localities have provided a continuously changing variety of goods to regional and world markets. These commodities have included palm oil, yam, exotic fruit, coal, oil and other hydrocarbons, coca, cacao, cardamom, heroin poppy, emeralds and other gems, gold and other precious metals, furs, rare bird feathers, exotic species, tungsten, rubber, archeological heritage items, potatoes, ink, bananas, coffee, quinine, cocaine, and numerous others. Each has had a distinct source geography, labor requirements and market destinations. In a wet mountainous landscape, movement routes for these things constrict and overlap, giving some geographic continuity to

taxation and contraband. I am not aware of spatial information disproving what is an apparent correlation between violent acts and the source geographies or transportation routes of commercial export items. While spatial coincidence does not destroy arguments preferring cultural factors as the causal force of violence (culture could follow the goods), it could reasonably diminish the strength of those arguments. I perceive (have not proven statistically) a coincidence in the spatial distribution of landmines (as reflected in the left-hand map in Figure 10), for instance, with the source geographies of hydrocarbon extraction and coca cultivation. By 2003, the geographies of the two commodities extended east of the eastern cordillera, as did the combat. The two commodities were not fight-worthy resources at the end of the 19th century, however. While I infer that the correlation of combats with the location of these two natural resources likely reflects some kind of causal relationship, even the observed correlation is tenuous. Additional variables independently affect each. For instance, the medical control of malaria and yellow fever contributes to the potential to exploit hydrocarbons and coca in the lowlands, and simultaneously contributes to the potential to fight in those environments.

Emeralds are one of Colombia's iconic export products and the object of centuries of smuggling. They are the object of epochal stories of violence and retribution. They stopped being the focus of Colombian social drama, however, when the lands of the emerald mines were subdued by force, then subjected to a more rigorous and formal property regime. Such formalization and (albeit incomplete) imposition of the rule-of-law occurred before coca and heroin paste ascended as the most profitable illicit commodities. I admit that my assertion regarding the distinct historical relationship of emeralds to the spatial pattern of violence is not entirely accurate or complete. I believe, however, that it is valid enough to invite a related question: why are so many places within Colombia peaceful, even places that had been formerly

violent, and even places where violence was focused around a smuggled commodity? Commodities, smuggling, and associated cultures of violence might be continuities in Colombia's history of organized violence, but then just as important if less obvious are the continuities and incontinuities of peacefulness.

My entering assumptions include that the geography of Colombian conflict features a spatial tension among the physical geographic footprints of natural resources, territorial claims associated with those resources (to include transportation routes, processing points and labor sources) and the military geography of actual and anticipated contact between armed organizations. An ultimate goal of those armed organizations is to gain or maintain territorial dominance over the aforementioned wealth items. By itself, this set of factors produces a baffling complexity defying proofs of causation. I couch assertions about risk distance within the same tension of factors. The Colombian guerrillas seek escape and sanctuary, but they simultaneously seek proximity to commodity geographies while they second-guess the second-guessing of their armed pursuers. Add to this the fact that all the parties make mistakes. The manifestation of these human decisions does not result in a particularly neat map of anything. Nevertheless, a useful separation of concepts appears. The geography of the conflict is larger than the geography of impunity. Places where fugitives must go to (or through) in order to maintain their impunity constitute the geography of impunity. The geography of the conflict is these places of impunity plus the geography of lucrative targets of predation.

This dissertation focuses the theory of risk distance on pursuits by armed groups against one-another. Notably, the movements within that dynamic involve origins and destinations, 'from' and 'to.' In the context of armed competition, the fugitive force tries to escape in part because a fugitive leader senses that his entity has less physical power than his rival, at least at

the most immediately relevant times and places. In a broader context of a conflict involving insurgents, criminals and hybrids (that are most often the fugitive entities during these pursuits or 'chases') the origin or beginning locations might be a government or economic target that the insurgent has recently 'taken' or 'hit.' It might also be a source area of economic predation, such a coca cultivation area or processing plant. In this sense, we might map the 'conflict geography' as not just the terrain that the fugitive seeks in order to gain distance advantages by increasing the risks to his pursuers, but also the locations of and routes from the initiation points of the fugitive movement.

The above said, the source location of a commodity may or may not be the most important geographic reflection of the resource competition phenomena. Some commodity often serves as the object if not cause of social distension and violence. However, the locations of targets only indirectly related to the commodity will adjust the spatial distribution of the violence. For instance, a labor union's leaders probably have a geographic footprint only tangentially related to the geographic footprint of some commodity the extraction or transport of which is imperative to the existence of their union. In addition, although they are not economic targets per se, some communities are coincidentally vulnerable to extreme violence because the actions of individuals in those communities can greatly influence the outcome of armed pursuits. That influence is indirectly the product of the physical location of those communities. Pursuer and fugitive depend on information and silence, and so the perceived loyalty of some (unfortunately located) communities becomes a salient factor in decisions by armed elements to use force against them. In addition, some elements of the civilian community, especially working-age men, may themselves be part of a commodity's geography as extraction or

processing inputs. As such, they can become targets of extortion, vengeance or simple elimination as economic factors.

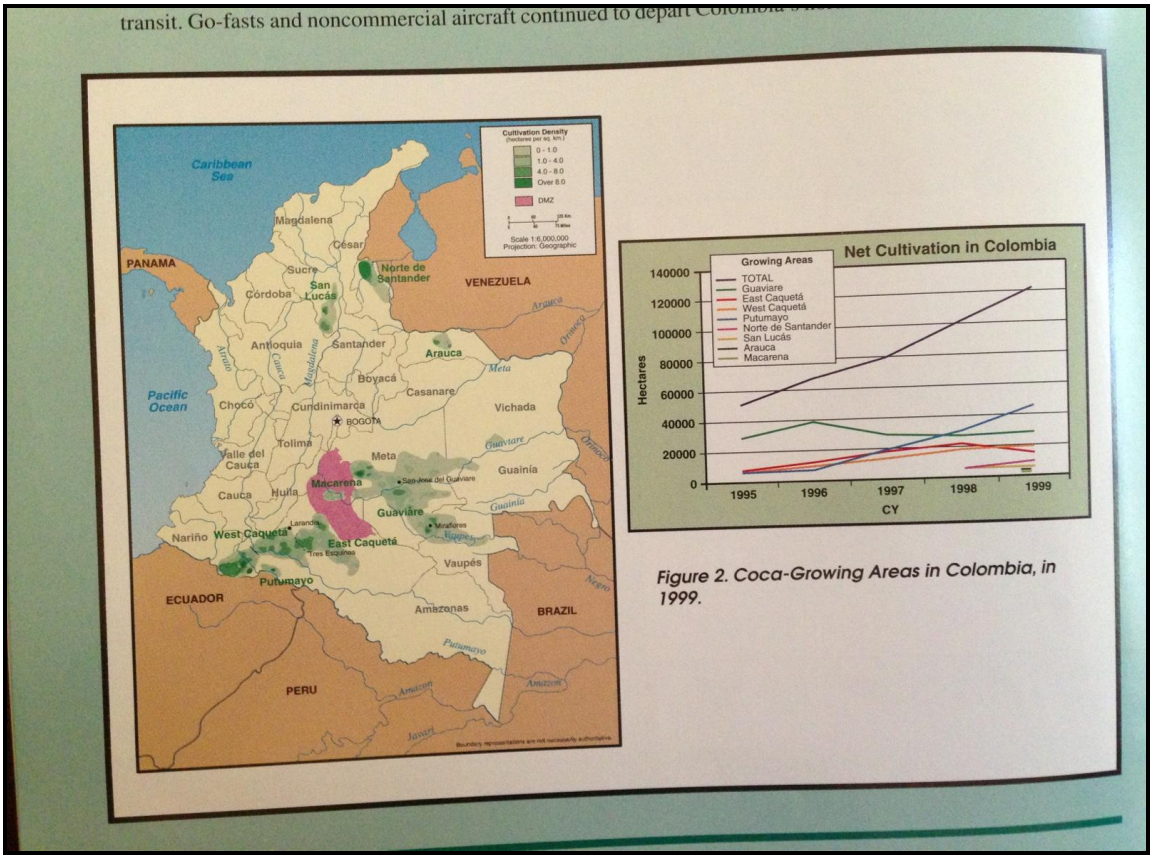


Figure 2. Coca-Growing Areas in Colombia, in 1999.

Figure 11: Coca cultivation circa 1999 according to the US counternarcotics office. (ONDCP 2000) The green blotches represent concentrations of coca cultivation. The pink area is the zone ceded to the FARC from 1998-2002. Compare this map to Figure 51, p. 149 in which the mapmakers try to describe other aspects of the coca-related geography, including territorial control, paste production areas, product movement routes, and escape to sanctuary. Also compare this map to Figure 12, a UN map produced five years later.

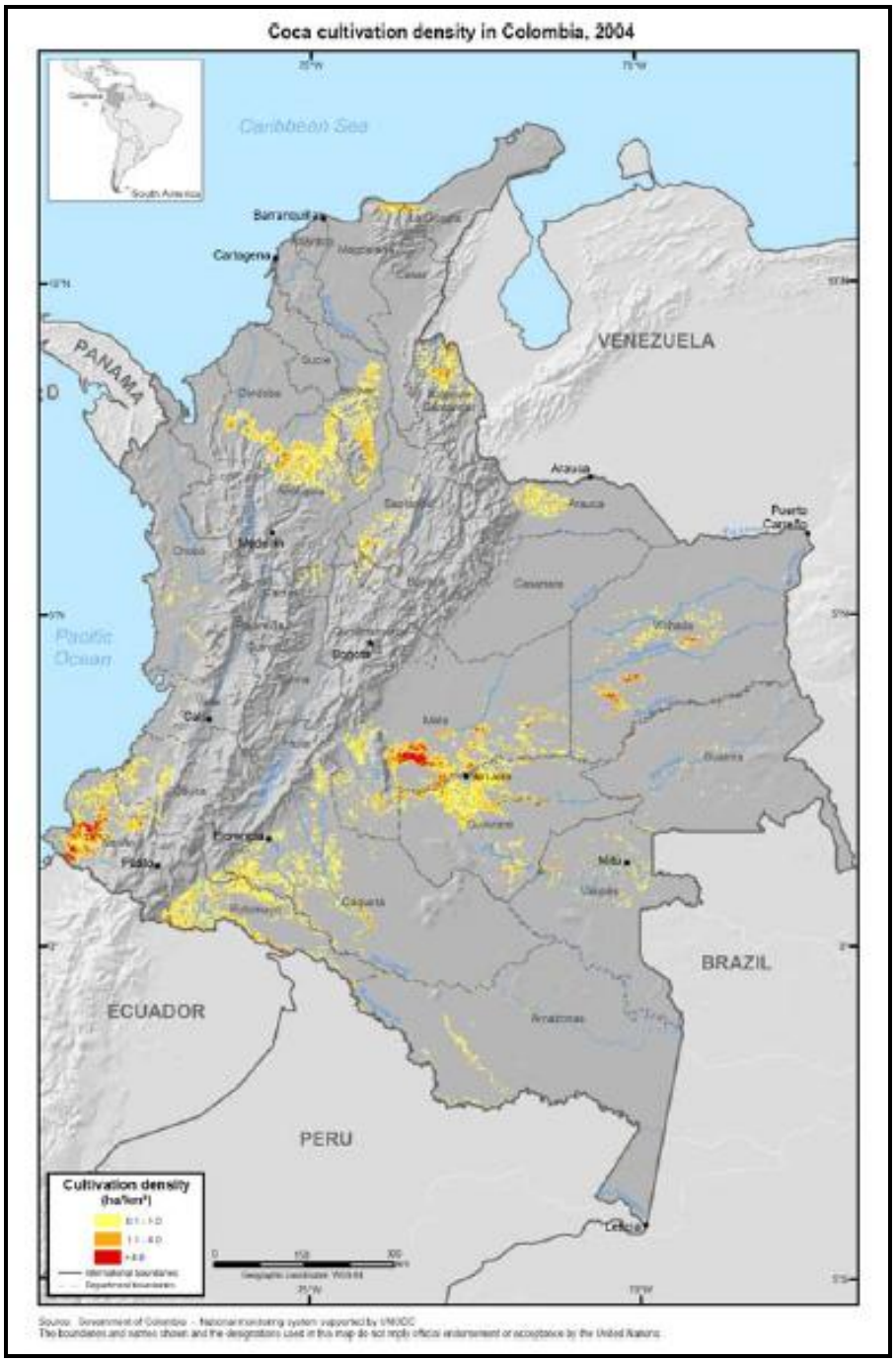


Figure 12: Coca cultivation circa 2004 according to the United Nations counternarcotics office. (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2005) This 2004 rendering shows previously un-depicted cultivation in the Santa Marta region on the Atlantic coast, a high concentration in Tumaco in the southwest, expansion in Antioquia, etc. From this UN map, the intense Plan Colombia aerial eradication applied in Putumayo to the south seems to have 'worked'.

On 10 March 1984, the Colombian National Police found a place that they had known for some time existed, but could not find, Tranquilandia, an enormous cocaine production facility in Puerto Rico County in Caquetá along the banks of the Yari River, south of San José del Guaviare. The discovery and subsequent dismantling of Tranquilandia was a great financial blow to the Medellín Cartel (Pablo Escobar, the Ochoa Vázquez brothers, and others), to which Pablo Escobar reacted violently. He had several of the officials involved in the Tranquilandia raid assassinated, including the Minister of Justice, a senior judge and a number of police officers. Pablo Escobar would not be killed until 1993. The Tranquilandia discovery gave the government and the public a more vivid idea of the dimensions of the problem. Few police had seen anything greater than small makeshift laboratories. Tranquilandia had sixteen thousand gallons of gasoline, three thousand cans of acetone, five thousand of ether, huge automated drying racks. To the detectives it was unbelievable. The immense lines of supply for the precursor chemicals eventually gave the location away. It also did not have a large guard force; two helicopters of police agents were able to overwhelm it.

The uncovering of Tranquilandia would greatly favor the FARC. It weakened the Medellín Cartel at a time when the FARC leadership was coming to accept a number of compromises with what at first they kept at arms' length as a dirty business. They taxed the movement of product and precursor chemicals where possible, extorted cartel hierarchies -- at times by kidnappings, and organized (often forcefully) the displacement of agricultural labor. The cartels were as dangerous as the FARC, however, especially in and near the cities. The balance of power and respect shifted somewhat with the blow against the Medellín cartel, but moreover, it led to agreements between the FARC and the Medellín cartel that the FARC would provide the physical protection necessary for certain rural operations to continue. The result of

this shift can be seen in the takedown of the cocaine production facilities at Gaitania in 2005. What required a platoon of police at Tranquilandia required thousands of soldiers at Gaitania. The remoteness was equivalent and the normal distances not essentially changed. Both locations, however, allowed close proximity to a valuable commodities source and access to a smuggling highway. In the expanse of the Macarena/Caguán/Guaviare jungle, the FARC was, with a relatively small investment, able to make the cost distances for any government force very high and their risk distances very short.

Land and property as continuity and discontinuity

Perhaps what has been missing from the Colombian social compact is a sufficiently formalized property system. This is not a common sentiment among Colombians; or rather, the notion of formalized property is unpopular among a sizeable portion of the intellectual elite in Colombia. Property is not a popular theoretical concept, the Spanish word *propiedad* having suffered the same or worse historical abuse as its English cognate. Transparency of the evidence of land ownership is a central part of what makes real property records formal, and transparency in Colombia has improved slowly if at all in recent years. The public records, evidence of who owns what, is only a part of a formalized property regime, only a part of the greater social technology of a formal property system. Institutions must exist that can give strength and practical effect to the evidence. Courts, markets and democratic processes are the backbone elements that give property ownership records meaning. In Colombia, the courts have been far away and expensive to access, the market for land in rural areas is crippled by arcane statutes and impracticable travel times, and the local democratic processes have been trumped in many rural

areas by a variety of communal ownership schemes, some well-meant and others simple arrogations.

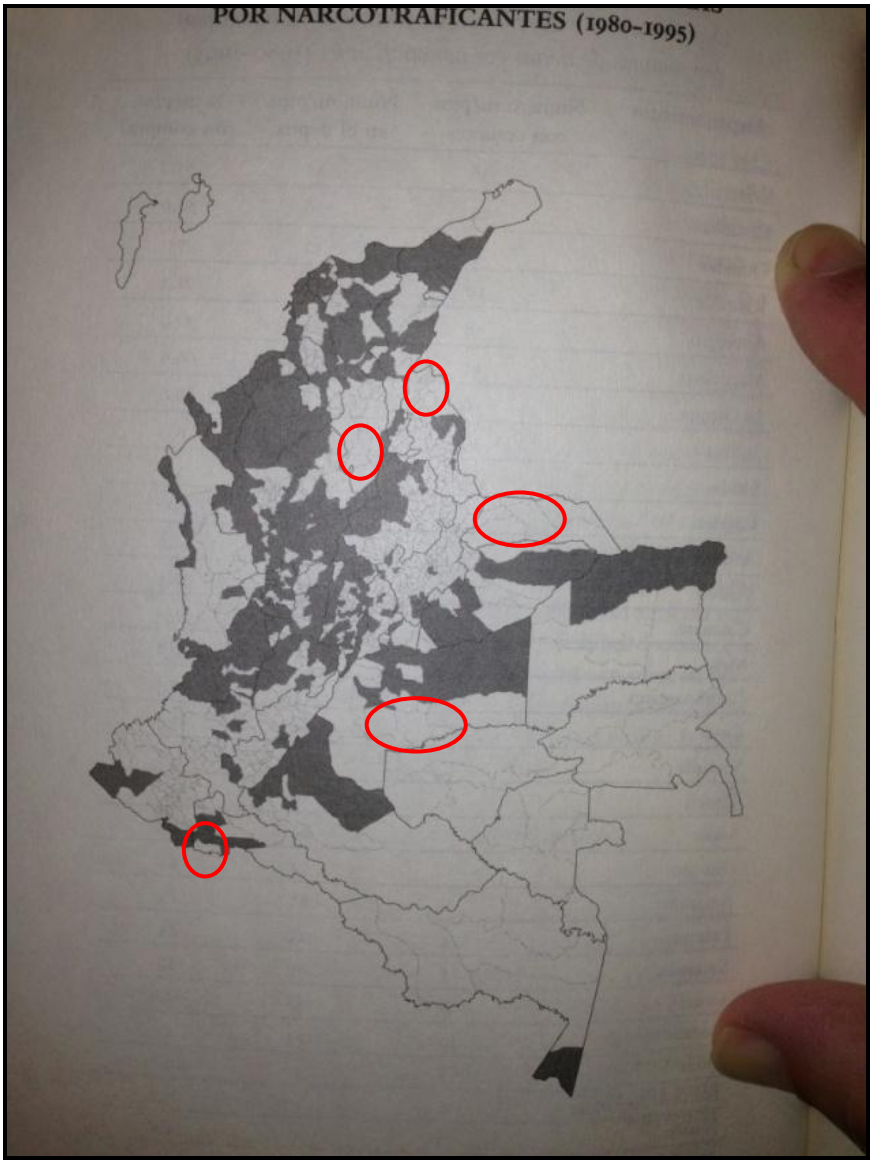


Figure 13: Counties where drug barons purchased land circa 1980-1985 (Reyes 2009, p. 76) Professor Reyes did not reveal the method for acquiring this data. Of note is the lack of land purchase in the Catatumbo, southern Bolivar Department, Arauca, Meta or southwestern Putumayo along the Ecuadoran border (circled in red). These were all coca cultivation areas by the late 1990s, as can be seen in figures 11 and 12. My suposition is that suitable coca growing land in these areas was controlled by the FARC or ELN, making sale to other drug lords unlikely.

One of the most promising and disturbing aspects of the current peace negotiations revolves around land redistribution. The FARC has long asserted land reform as a column of its revolutionary social objectives. Over time, the shape of the FARC's propositions has come to appear more and more programmatic and bureaucratic (tax relief, technical outreach, price supports, market research). This banality seems to parallel fashions within the Ministry of Agriculture and so elicits increased skepticism from those who see a mild if dull conspiracy. Part of the challenge is not so much the historic failure of such rural agricultural land reforms as it is the lack of transparency as to where all the land is that might be involved. A stable incantation of Colombian cynicism holds that the land redistribution agency has redistributed millions of hectares of rural land, but without recording exactly where that land is. (Demarest 2003). As figures 14 and 15 suggest, tenancy patterns in Colombia are more complex than perhaps journalistic accounts might lead one to believe. The types and predominance of types of tenancy do not appear to be highly correlated spatially to the most conflictive zones.

Many Colombians want the government to negotiate with the FARC, but when asked what in such a negotiation might be given to the FARC as part of a deal, few Colombians feel any important concession should made if it means giving land. Areas where the FARC denounces land ownership injustices (ostensibly on behalf of the rural peasant) and demands reforms as part of a peace settlement, always seem to fall along some FARC escape route or supply line. Like other great landowners, the FARC has not shown enthusiasm for transparency of ownership rights and duties in areas where it controls the population. The FARC has geographically concerted its population control, land ownership, and military strategy.

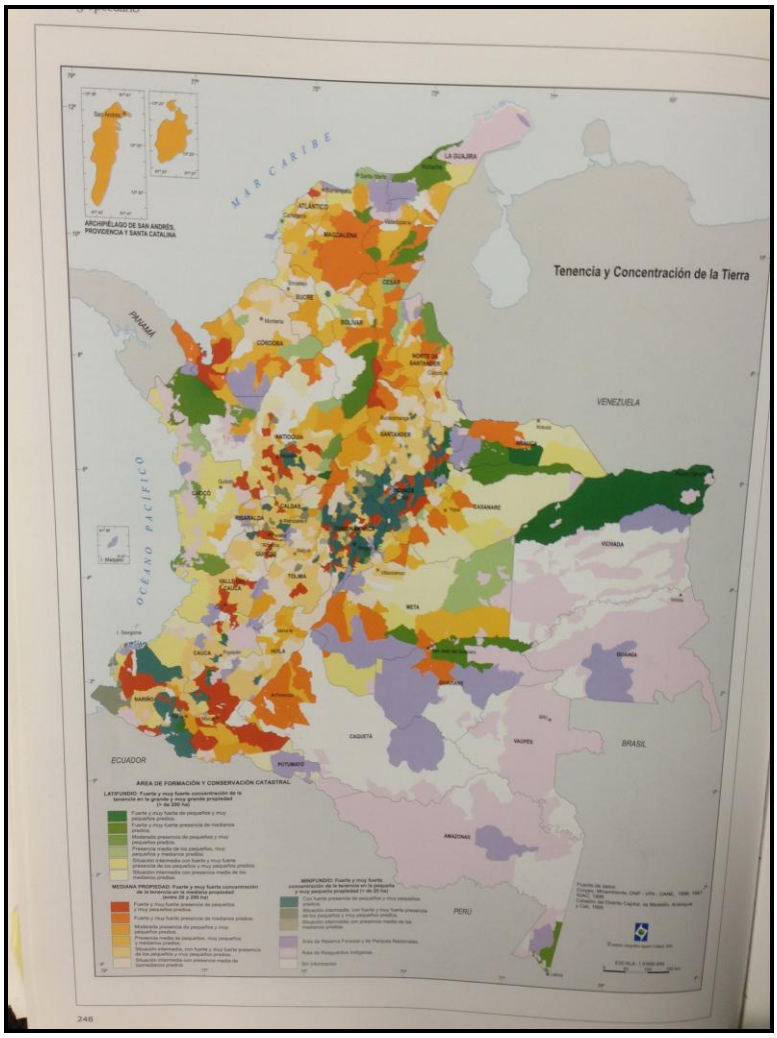


Figure 14: A tenancy and ownership concentration map from the National Atlas of Colombia (IGAC 2002, p 248) The color scheme is a bit confusing in that the dark green represents areas featuring mostly larger landholdings (greater than 500 acres), while the dark blue-green areas feature mostly *minifundios* (the smallest holdings of less than 50 acres). The purple and pinkish areas are nature preserves or indigenous reservations. The red and orange tones are for areas of medium-size plots (between 50 and 500 acres). The kinds of tenancy and size of holdings varies greatly among the several most conflictive regions. There is no observable correlation between landholding patterns and organized violence.

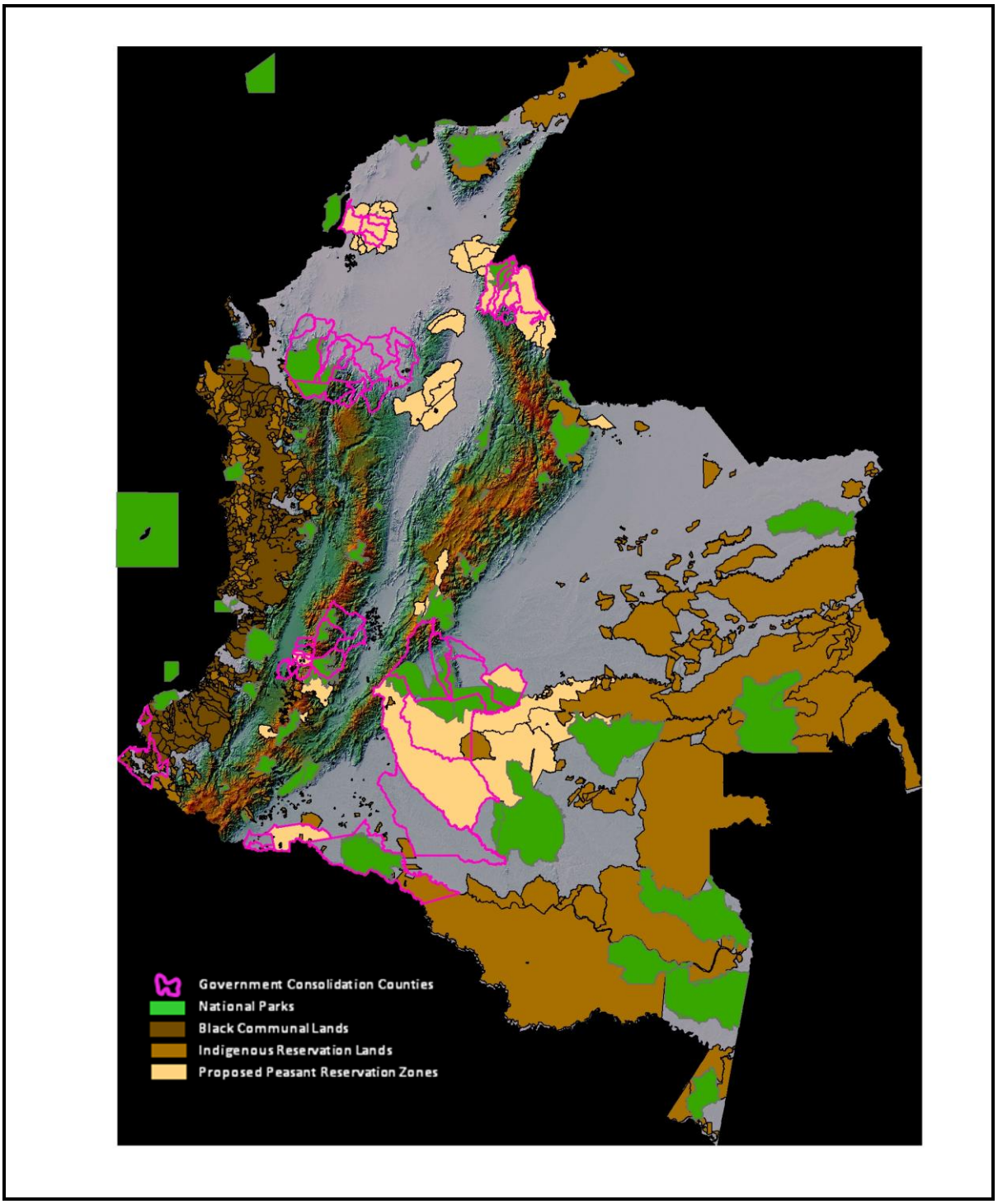


Figure 15:Communal lands, prospective 'peasant reservation zones' and 2012 'consolidation' counties. Not included are government 'baldio' (unpatented) lands, smaller preservation areas, and lands expropriated and in court processes. (Base data from SIGOT 2013).

Urbanization as discontinuity

One of the most obvious changes in the geography of Colombia over the past century, as in much of the world, regards urban demographics. Medellín, for instance, did not exist as an industrial metropolis at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. That part of Antioquia would become one of the most densely populated, both rural and urban, parts of the country. In 1900 it was still of no particular economic consequence, and the transportation network underdeveloped. Until the 20th century, some Antioqueño peasants could still make a living carrying rich travelers in a seat on the peasant's back, many of the precipices being daunting even for burros. The total population of Colombia has increased ten-fold in the last century and unlike the majority of Latin American countries, Colombia boasts several cities of over a million inhabitants. It seems that urban life presents an inconsistency between the geography of 1900 and that of 2000. However, a consistency may exist as well. Although the country has developed an urban life of the most cosmopolitan stripe, the move to cities has left some formerly populated areas less populated. Other formerly inaccessible areas have opened for colonization. So, while we can safely say that Colombia today has an urban character that it did not have a century ago, we can also say that, just as it did a century ago, Colombia has a rural character.

The history of FARC success between 1980 and 2000 exposes the value of a theoretical distinction between *rural* and *urban*, as flexible as those terms might seem. Figure 16 is a pair of visualizations of georeferenced data from the Colombian national geographic institute that shows spatial distribution of the Colombian rural population in 1993 and 2013. The underlying census data is somewhat inconsistent as to collection method in those two years, but generally reflects persons living in areas within a county but outside the county seat as opposed to within the county seat. The county seats, however small, were urban by definition.

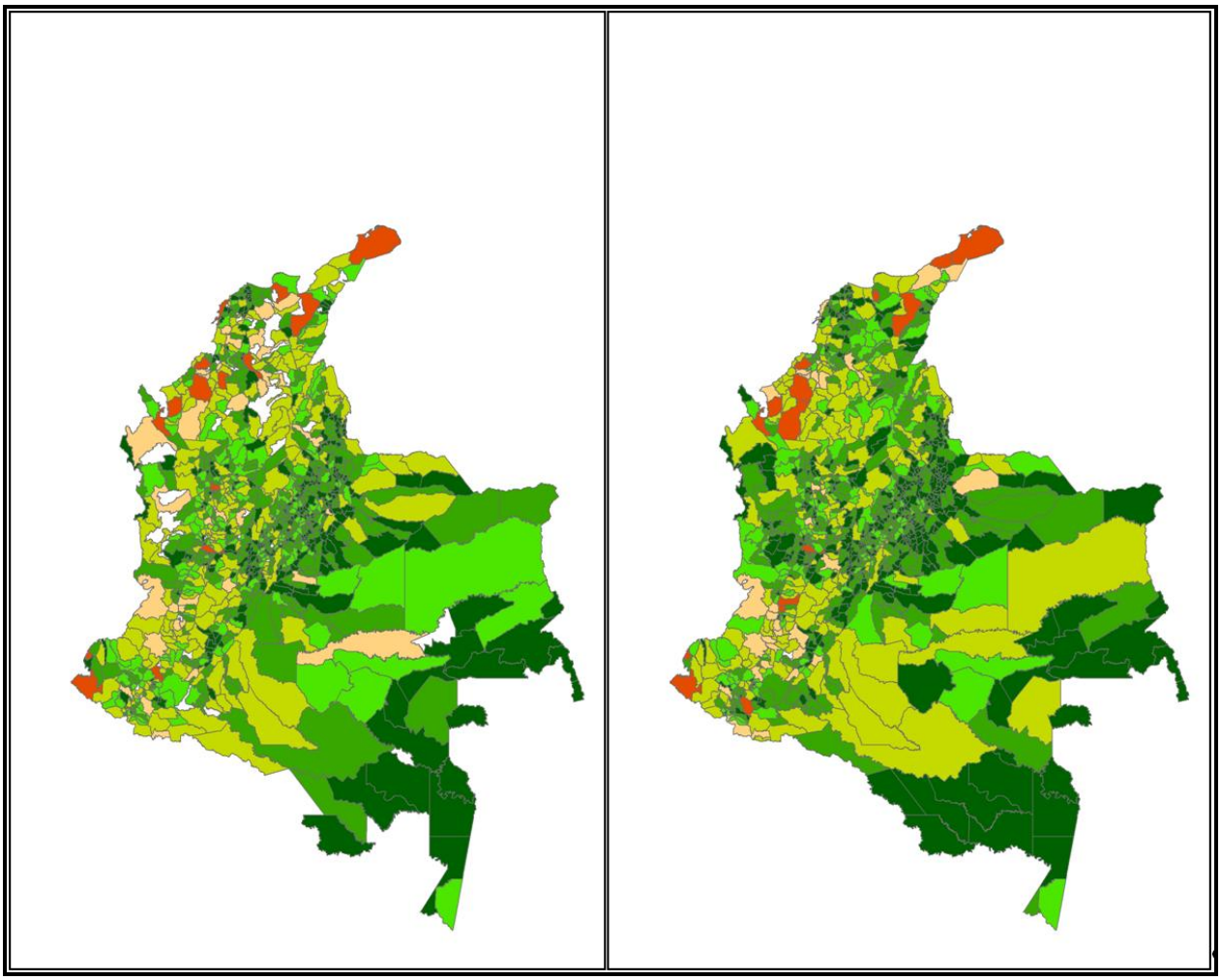


Figure 16: Rural population in 1993 (left) and in 2013. (SIGOT 2013) The Colombian statistical agency, for the purpose of these spatial representations, defined rural population as that population living within a county, but living outside the county seat or main urban center. Thus, some counties with high total populations and a large urban center will show a high rural population. The color ramp shows higher totals of rural population in darkest red and the lowest total of rural population in darkest green. The significance of these two maps is the not in the totals, but rather in the change in rural populations of counties over twenty years. A few of the most conflictive areas have experienced changes in total rural populations, such as the Paramillo area of Antioquia or the El Catatumbo area of Norte de Santander. The change has gone in both directions, however, while many conflictive areas have been demographically stable. Some researchers are challenging the statistical definition of *rural*, seeking a better use of the concept. (See Figure 17).

In Colombia, the distribution of rural population is higher than one hundred persons per square kilometer in some areas of the country and less than one person per square kilometer in others. (IGAC 2002, p 199). The two decades between 1980 and 2000 were growth decades for the FARC, which quadrupled its foot strength and increased its financial power almost

immeasurably during the same period in which the previously dominant M19 guerrillas disappeared. (Safford and Palacios 2002, p. 362).

The boost afforded to the FARC's financial portfolio by the cocaine industry came during the decade that the greater global geopolitical environment was absorbing a sea change. At the end of its 1980s decline, the Soviet Union abruptly ceased to support Cuba economically, and with Cuba thus unsupported, the FARC also was, if to a lesser degree, left unsupported. Providentially for the Colombian drug trade (and especially coca cultivation within Colombian territory); the United States succeeded in suppressing coca cultivation in Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia, the principal source countries at the time. As a result, cultivation in Colombia boomed at about the same time that the Soviet Union was disappearing, the Cold War coming to an end and support to many revolutionaries with it. The FARC had developed its sanctuaries in rural areas, however, especially to the east and south of the eastern mountain range. When the cultivation of coca appeared in those regions, the FARC already existed as the best-organized, best-armed and most disciplined organization in the area. The solution to FARC logistics problems all but fell into its lap. Urban drug lords sought to expand production in the eastern jungle plains. They were met by demands from an organization whose leaders and followers were familiar with the terrain, inured to walking long distances, and as ruthless as the drug lords were.

The other direction from east to west mirrored, in a way, the experience of the drug lords with the FARC. As the FARC tried to recruit young urban males from peripheral communities, around Medellín for instance, FARC leaders met the inverse experience. Urban youth saw no attraction in walking long distances in the mountains. They were used to concealable weapons and motors. Revolutionary jargon only seemed to work if tied to hip-hop, and for the hidebound

leadership of the FARC, that was a difficult psychological reach. The FARC was born as a rural insurgency when Colombia was beginning its rapid urbanization. The country would move from fifty percent urban to perhaps eighty-five percent urban depending on the definitions. Whatever the definition, the FARC did not adapt to urban terrain. All of Colombia's internal wars had been rural in that they centered on rural lines of communication and rural sanctuaries. Today, so much of the population lives in cities; it may be that the expansion of the built environment simply left the FARC in the jungle. Nevertheless, the rural experience of the FARC still matches Colombia's rural character.

When people stand at the corner of Junín and La Playa streets, in the shadow of the iconic Coltejer building, they know they are in urban space, at an urban place. Twenty miles west in Ebéjico, save for that town's headlong rush to embrace tourism, people know they are in a rural area. In between what downtown Medellín and a side street in Ebéjico are like, there is a good deal of space for argument about what the words urban and rural mean. The FARC is a *rural* guerrilla, and that classification is helpful to understand why it has had relative longevity compared to other Colombian insurgent organizations and why it maintains presence and strength where it does today. The FARC was able to enter Medellín, and at least vie for influence in the peripheral zones of that city because it could maintain presence in rural areas located only a cannon shot outside the city.

Urban must mean more than a relatively greater density of buildings and people. It also means sharing services such as a power source, entertainment, potable water, or a sewer system. Some would say that a restaurant is the beginning of urban life, while others might say it is a church of some kind. Advancement in technology and levels of urbanness seem correlated. The result of all these things is a cultural distinction, and while the details of urban as compared to

rural cultures are material for endless narrative, at least there appears to be a strong consensus that a difference exists, that people from Holton, Kansas (population 3,322) enjoy a more rural culture than do the people in Manhattan (New York). In Colombia, perhaps as elsewhere in the world, urban dwellers find communal and socialist solutions to basic needs more palpable and logical. Community land-use is a necessity and of obvious material advantage. In rural Colombia, the basket of ownership rights tends to shift toward the family and away from government. Therein lies a long-term intellectual conundrum for an organization like the FARC. Much of its intellectual support comes from the cities and the cosmopolitan minds they have produced. Meanwhile, the FARC attempts projects of social ownership in rural places, but much of rural Colombia questions communal solutions, especially if the projects are not genuinely autochthonous. In other locales, communal organizations already stake claim to control over the basket of land rights.

Maybe eighty-five percent of Colombians live in cities of over fifty thousand people, most of which have centralized sewer systems. Where rural and urban begin and end in Colombia are academic curiosities and matters of self-identity. If a person rides a *chiva* (a colorful bus-like truck conversion with a wooden cabin, no doors and pithy sayings on the bumpers) as an economic necessity, he or she probably calls the *chiva* a *misto* (mostly urbanites and tourists call it a *chiva*). The Colombian who unwittingly calls a *chiva* a *misto* is probably a rural Colombian, whether self-identification or democratic vote is the adjudicating criterion. The geographic extents within which *chivas* roll as *mistos* has been shrinking because suburban areas have reached out, roads have improved (allowing lighter-framed buses), and fewer people live in some of the more remote areas. In those parts of Colombia where most regular riders call the bus a *misto*, they have probably also ridden a lot of mules. (Fernández, 2008)

A ‘demobilized’ FARC guerrilla leader related to me that in his block (a regional guerrilla unit), mules were an integral part of logistics and operational movement. For years, it was puzzling and reassuring to the guerrillas that the Colombian army disdained the use of *bestias* (beasts). The guerrillas, meanwhile, maintained sizeable units dedicated to animal husbandry and pack loading. The mule provided a means to transport water or mortar components too heavy for the individual guerrilla fighters. They also changed the formula of speed and distance when the government units were pursuing them in rough terrain. The mule was a significant element in the tactical math of creating advantage in aggregate culminating points. The landmine was extremely influential to this same end, but mule handling was also a technology that gave the guerrilla an ability to gain separation from pursuing army units. Landmines shortened the risk distances of army units in contact while mules lengthened the risk distances of the guerrillas. A simplification to be sure, but in general this formula worked hundreds of times over.

The rider of a mule is probably rural, but might or might not be a *campesino*. This term, often translated as peasant, is central to political argument in Colombia today. I am aware of no good map of where someone is or is not a *campesino,* and no test even as haphazard as what might suffice for the word rural. Nevertheless, a number of organizations, central among them the FARC and its sister the ELN, claim to represent *campesinos,* and would be their exclusive agents. Within other Colombian constituencies, a quantity of thought exists (perhaps unevenly distributed and of intermittent flow) holding that *campesino,* as a collective concept, is a phenomenon to be preserved as a matter of national cultural identity. For some Colombians, and apparently for a considerable community of foreigners interested in Colombia, *campesino* is a presumptively admirable category of human. According to this view, the *campesino* has a

deeply rooted identity that is inherently worthy of preservation. The *campesino* lives and represents a kind of environmental sustainability, purity of ethic and so on. As a political entity, Colombians regard the *campesino* as an underdog who must be organized and represented by some person or group of persons better equipped to confront the vicissitudes and travesties of a materially more powerful and morally more corrupt system. The FARC leaders are not the only ones who would supply that leadership. The Ministry of Agriculture also vies in the contest to represent the *campesino*, as do organizations of large landowners and many disparate elements of civil society.

Cities seem to be where insurgencies go to die, and so it is no wonder that the FARC opted for surrounding them and extorting power, rather than trying to build physical sanctuaries within them. It is difficult for an outlaw organization to control anonymity in a city. The urban dweller has too many opportunities to anonymously report information to authorities, and the authorities have too many opportunities to plant things and people within an urban insurgent organization. This depends, however, on how the insurgent uses city terrain, and on timing. In Colombia's cities, the FARC encountered criminal organizations already in control of key neighborhoods and key smuggling routes. The gangs controlled anonymity, kept secrets well, and used selective violence to maintain territorial control. Urban gangs are more accostomed to the speeds, technologies, timing and pitfalls of urban life. The FARC found it difficult to dominate the drug gangs inside urban space.

"The mass movement of Colombia's poor helped boost agricultural productivity, to improve living standards in areas the migrants left, and even to transform the landscape." (Palacios and Safford 1995, p. 223). This statement sets awkwardly against the popularly repeated assertion that what is wrong with Colombia, and a base cause of the conflict, is a

disparity in the ownership of agriculturally productive land. Such an argument should at least be made to shoulder the requirement of additional evidence. In Colombia, mass movement to the cities after WWII coincided with the inception of the pre-FARC communist guerrillas and has run its course during the FARC's institutional lifetime. If only two phenomena were present in the Colombian world -- increase in FARC power and urbanization -- the two would show a positive correlation. It may be that the movement of population away from some rural areas lessened local institutional and individual resistance to FARC presence. Perhaps the violence perpetrated by the FARC, by those opposing the FARC, or simply by the violent interplay, accelerated the exodus from some rural areas. Increase in FARC power accelerated an already rapid evacuation of already isolated areas. Most of the remote places I chose for discussion from this research have lost population in recent years even as the country as a whole showed a population increase. In 1905, Colombia had over four and a half million inhabitants; in 1951 about eleven and a half million; in 1973 almost twenty-one million; in 1985 (by which time the FARC was rapidly increasing its power because of the cocaine industry) the country had almost twenty-eight million people. By 1993 over thirty-three million and now, twenty years later, Colombia has about forty-five million citizens. (Caracol 2012).

The most significant relationship between Colombian urbanization and the FARC's power prospects may be as follows: Urbanization took the society and most of Colombian space further and further away from any conditions that would favor the FARC's being able to enjoy impunity, gain military initiative and achieve victory via the use of force. Political power might grow out the barrel of a gun, but it is a lot harder to change political power by force when geography and technological advancements increasingly favor the side that is in pursuit of a weaker foe.

Not all of the change brought by urbanization redounds against the rural guerrillas. The total expanse of rural territory in Colombia available for economic activity has been increasing to the extent that jungle areas have been cleared for coca production. This may be even truer of oil producing areas, observing the network of legally and centrally planned roads that have developed in them. As an aside, Casanare, source of most of the current oil production increase, is savanna, not humid canopy jungle. Many Colombians see the jungle areas of southeastern Colombia as preservation areas for species diversity and wild nature. The coca industry might be more destructive of the Colombian jungle ecosystem than the oil industry is of the savanna, although guerrilla attacks on Colombia's oil and gas pipeline infrastructure have caused great harm. (Márquez 2004; Arredondo and Fraud 2004; Palacios 2012).

Figure 17 is from a study asserting that a third of Colombians still live a rural life in counties that make up almost 95% of the surface area. The study is the subject of the first of nine essays that follow the overall title theme, "The distressing geography of the countryside." (La Silla Vacia 2011). The authors state and depict in maps that the country is rural, that rural correlates to low indices of material wellbeing, and that the violence is rural. Together the essays imply that the lack of material well-being causes the violence. The spatial evidence as indicated on the maps is more ambiguous, however. For instance, in the same La Silla Vaca presentation is a map of the Human Development Index by counties (Figure 18). Note that the counties in Arauca or in Putumayo, or in the eastern part of Valle del Cauca Department near the Nevado del Huila are high on the index, whereas other conflictive zones appear to be low on the index.

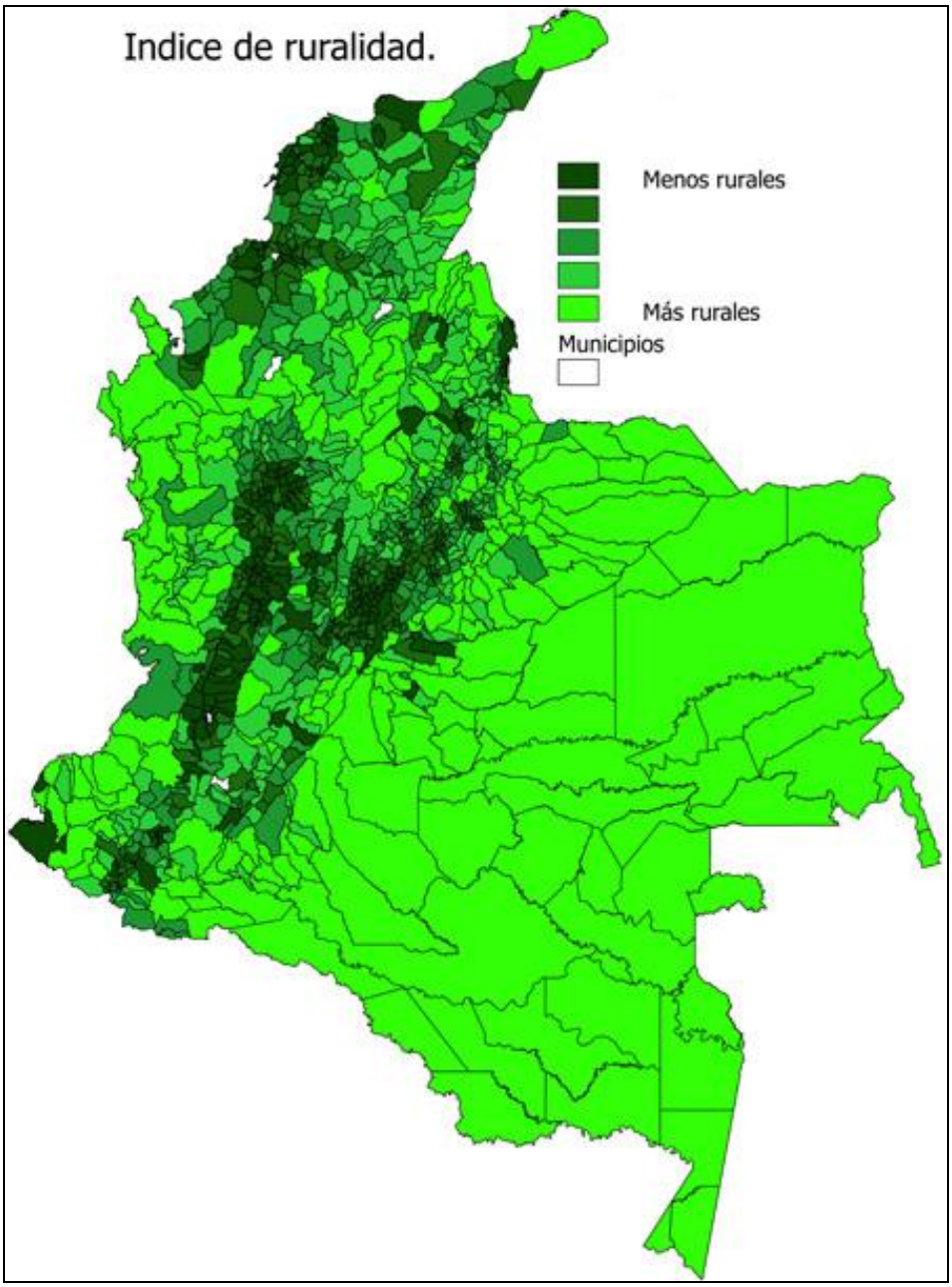


Figure 17: Rural and less rural counties. (La Silla Vacia 2011) Darker is less rural and lighter is more rural. According to these researchers, the standard government statistics (and therefore the spatial description that those statistics generate) understate the rural stamp of the country. The researchers included a set of 'lifeways' factors to better describe, in their opinions, the percentage of Colombians that lead a 'rural' life. Under both the government definitions and this more complex methodology, the most contested territory in Colombia today is rural.

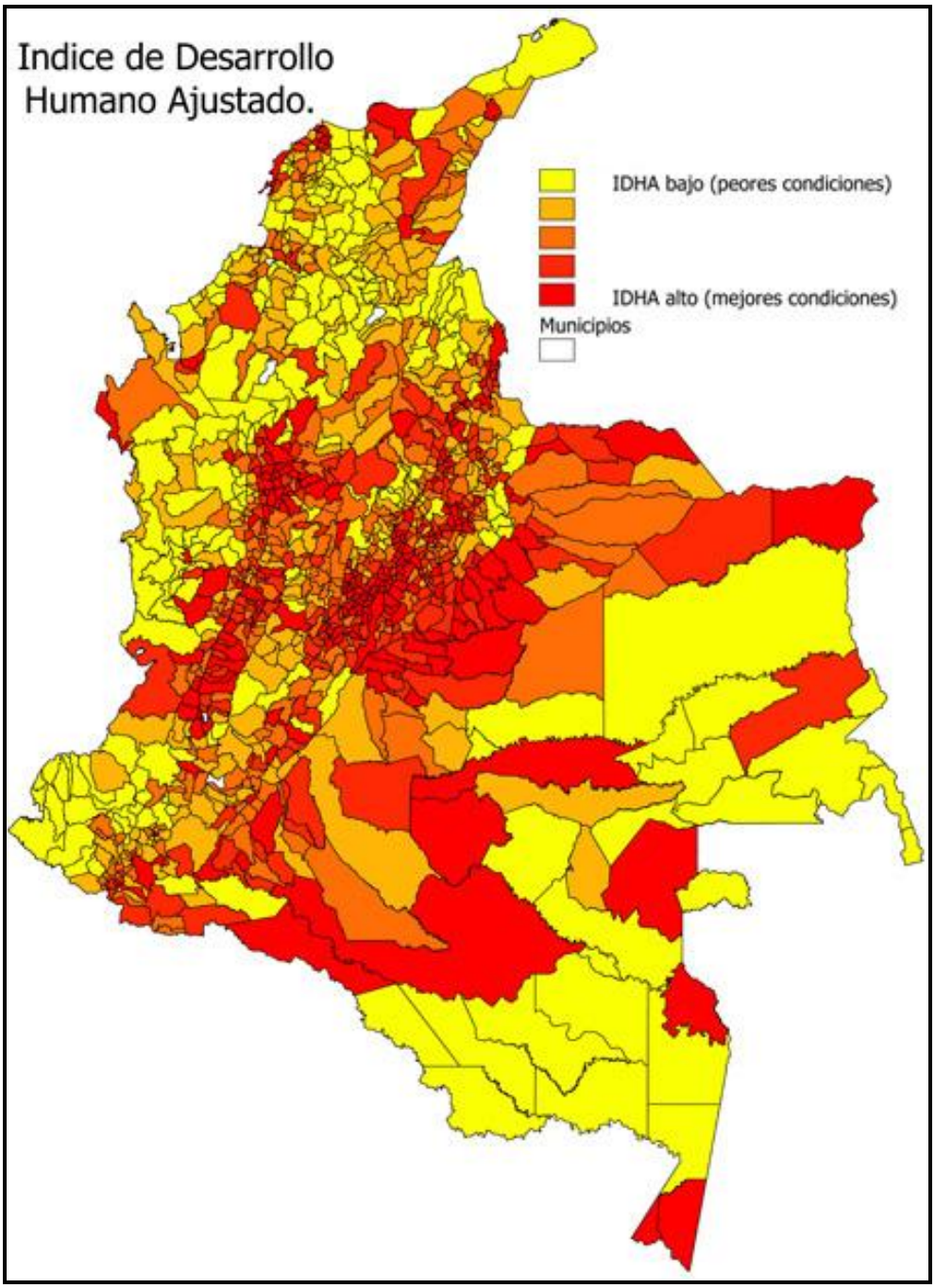


Figure 18: Indice de Desarrollo Humano Ajustado (Adjusted Human Development Index). It was not clear to me from the article how the index was 'adjusted'. In any case, this map does not support a premise that the violence is caused in some way by socio-economic performance, as the spatial representation does not even present a clear correlation of violence to human development as defined by the indexers. (La Silla Vacia 2011).

Likewise, the La Silla Vaca presentation includes a map showing land ownership concentration. The researchers suggest in their text a causal relationship between the conflict

and an over-concentration in ownership of rural land. At least they suggest a causal relationship between over-concentration and quality of life, which in turn, they argue, has a causal relationship to the conflict. Their map, however, does not, appear even to offer a strong correlation of these variable.

I believe there exists a correlation between ruralness (almost irrespective of the definition) and the spatial concentration of the conflict. However, there have also been urban battles and extreme organized urban violence. The battle for *Comuna 13* in Medellín is the example I use later in this text. The challenge facing the FARC in Colombia's urban geography includes but goes beyond decadal demographic shifts and simple scale. Certain operational aspects associated with criminal necessities and behaviors within the cities made them increasingly difficult for the FARC to *take*, as it might take some rural town. Once the FARC's logistical strength was no longer in ascendance, the possibility of surrounding and taking a city from the outside-in had evaporated. The rural areas that are today the most hotly contested by organized armed groups are located against the international borders, or (now to a lesser degree) along other escape routes to guerrilla or gangster sanctuaries within the country.

Some observers will suggest that social resistance to the mainstream political structure -- a resistance that is indeed present in some rural and urban communities -- is due to a lack of public or government services. Some, including the La Silla Vaca researchers, may tend to conflate the provision of government services with material prosperity. Social resistance in Colombia, however, is often rooted in generational political affinities within a community, that resistance predating the colonization of economically remote areas. Some colonizers were themselves part of an escape from pursuing forces and authorities. Some of these fugitive communities, tied perhaps to decades-old sectarian violence or associated with one or more of

the various guerrilla movements, have, after moving to the economically remotest areas of Colombia, demanded public services from the system they resist, arguing that the lack of those services is the reason for their disaffection.

Ecological harm as a discontinuity

Unintended and harmful affronts to the surrounding environment are greater now than in the past. (Arredondo and Díaz 2004; Márquez 2004) While the most obvious reason for this is a greater population (45 million today as compared to 5 million in 1900), the difference is also due to the kinds of commodities that are the subject of parasitic behavior and illicit industry. The idea that South American jungle soils are poor is difficult to accept in view of the dense jungle vegetation, and the success of coca plantations that have been carved out of the dense vegetation. It seems more reasonable to assert that the soil is poor as a base for certain flora and not other. Coca crops do well. Unfortunately, those crops quickly deteriorate nearby ecosystems, as do the clearing patterns that precede them and counternarcotics activities in reaction to them. The callous dispersal of precursor chemicals alone has caused tremendous disruption to existing species of fauna and flora. In the north of Colombia, meanwhile, attacks on oil pipelines have caused oil spillages greater than that of the Exxon Valdez. (Cárdenas and Rodríguez 2004) Moreover, the movement of illicit farm labor populations has changed the ecology of some areas, including vast swaths of Putumayo and Guaviare. Assertions that illicit agriculture causes the environment to be less 'natural' than before may be subject to valid argument, but that agriculture has undeniably changed huge swaths of territory in Colombia in a way that supports fewer species accelerates erosion processes. The changes that have occurred in Colombia's jungle regions are at a larger scale than what we can associate with former spasms of Colombian

internal violence. In this sense, Colombia has been witness to some of the hemisphere's most egregious ecological disasters of the past half century, directly and indirectly, because of the internal war. This ecological stress can be greatly blamed on decisions made by leaders of the FARC and the ELN. (Nagle 2004).

Another area of stressed environment, perhaps less dramatic, involves Colombian cattle. The FARC has become not only the largest coca cartel, it apparently has become one of the largest cattle ranchers, having converted thousands of acres of smaller agricultural holdings into vast cattle producing areas. (This, by the way, is a current accusation, the exact geographical boundaries of which are yet to be exposed.) Perhaps what the FARC will accept at the negotiating table will have a lot to do geographically with cattle ranching, coca production, or gold mining. In such areas, we are likely to witness forms of communal agriculture or mining that may later draw scrutiny as agro-industry and mineral exploitation. Furthermore, if the FARC leaders can extort some sort of land concession, they could be the last to adhere to government ecological protection regulations.

Some in Colombia, with reason I think, fear that the peace process can only proceed if something of value is offered to the FARC, and in Colombia that something of value always seems to be real estate, whether it is agricultural land, a gold mine, a transport hub or even a constriction such as a bridge or mountain pass. How does this compare with the past? When the The War of the Thousand Days ended, the consequences of Liberal defeat included some expropriation and punitive taxation of Liberal landholdings. However, Colombia's physical internal remoteness, that is, the great travel distances between regions, did not improve. In fact, the war retarded the growth of a communications network that might have allowed Conservatives to translate their victory into centralized power. Except for the rich, most of

Colombia would remain isolated, giving the anti-federalist argument a permanent leg-up. At the end of WWI, in 1919, two groups of entrepreneurs vied to build an airline to link Bogotá, the burgeoning new city of Medellín, and the coast. (Semana 2004, p. 163). When the dust settled, the Sociedad Colombo-Alemana de Transporte Aéreo (Colombo-German Air Transport Corporation), SCADTA (what would ultimately become AVIANCA) had established the first economically viable air routes. The airplane reduced travel time for the well-heeled from Bogotá to the coast from days to hours. Unfortunately for the Antioqueños, they had selected French Farma biplanes made of wood and fabric, while their rivals had chosen metal German Junkers. The Farmas immediately took themselves out of contention against the mountainsides. For a long time in Colombia, the selection of the right technologies by small groups of persons has given them a competitive advantage over their rivals. As often as not, the technologies' purposes were to overcome distance.

World events as discontinuity

World events had only minor impact on the internal violence in 1900 Colombia. President Theodore Roosevelt's geostrategic appetite weighed on the fate of the Panamanian Isthmus, and undoubtedly the volatile market for coffee generated economic stress, but the internal violence of the end of the 19th century can be described as one of federalism anti-federalism conflict within Colombia. Flags were drawn around loyalties to local dons and the loyalty of the dons to one of two political parties. Some international intervention came from Venezuela, but hardly any from the rest of the world. While there exist hundreds of titles in the English language about the Boer War, there are almost none about the War of the Thousand Days. No one outside of Colombia (at least in the English-speaking world) paid much attention,

in part because of the contemporaneous Boer War. The *Violencia* of the 1950s continued that pattern, with the two principal parties setting the competitive poles. To resolve that conflict, the contending Liberal and Conservative parties came together to form what Colombians call the United Front. It was a concert within the same ruling elite, and as such presented a unified ideological target for the radical left. In the context of the Cold War, the armed left was then able to attract international sponsors while creating parallel, autochthonous enthusiasms.

The two traditional parties are nothing like what they had been, organizationally or ideologically, when the current warfare between the FARC and the government began five decades ago. Today, the Colombian elite is more diverse; and the population more urbane as well as urban. The Colombian war changed with the end of the Cold War and especially with the rise of Colombian coca cultivation. Now, globally oriented economically, Colombians see their internal war as more connected to the outside than it was in the past. One of the greatest discontinuities, then, between the current war and those of Colombia's past, is that now it is tied to external as well as internal factors and influences.

Religion, race, and poverty as continuities

Racial injustice has existed in Colombia and still does. (Duzán October 2008) In the early 17th century, before colonies in North America could claim a survivable presence in the New World, local leaders of some black *Pijao* and other groups rose against the Spanish colonizers. Most failed (fatally), but others succeeded. (Semana 2004, p. 33) In the past two hundred years, however, violence organized on the basis of race has been rare. It may be that the costs of conflict fall more heavily on black communities spatially, but this remains unproven. The leftist revolutionary movements had not until recently made racial grievance an appreciable

part of their overall argument in Colombia, and I have seen no evidence in the literature that there is a differential in skin color distribution between any of the violent armed groups and government forces.

Similarly, religion now plays only a vestigial and indirect role. Colombians rarely mention religious differences as an aspect of the supposed culture of violence. Religion is almost a non-factor as an impulse for Colombia's internal struggles, although it is notable that the leftist movements latched on to Liberation Theology as a vehicle for making inroads into the influence of the formal Catholic hierarchy and for using Christian beliefs in support of socialist arguments. To some degree, the leftist proposition is anti-Catholic, just as the Liberal proposition had been, to a lesser degree, anti-clerical. The Colombian army, meanwhile, has been a bastion of traditional Catholicism. In a sense, then, Colombians continue to fight the Spanish Civil War, which featured a significant Catholic–anti-Catholic dimension. Nevertheless, while the same formula attaches to the conflict in Colombia, it is superficial and constantly diminishing. The FARC commanders do not stress atheism as an element of indoctrination, preferring to avoid the issue of religion before offending their membership.

Claims of class-based warfare are felt strongly enough by some Colombians that they at times prove themselves, but the demographics and ideologies of the contenders often belie those claims. Colombians fight over the control of desirable/saleable commodities, where they come from, how to move them and who gets to tax the enterprise. Resentment exists toward what some perceive as an arrogant and self-serving elite, but whether such resentment is greater by degree than elsewhere in the world would be speculation. Perhaps a definable set of prominent families has been able to dominate electoral politics, and perhaps a large number, even a great majority of Colombian souls identify against these elites to some degree or another, even if they

do not subscribe to a progressive party or think themselves part of a proletariat. Nevertheless, a look at the spatial distribution of misery in Colombia -- comparing the performance of localities (relative to the general performance of the country) to the incidence of organized violence -- has not presented strong correlations. Colombians take for granted that illegal armed groups can and do recruit the bulk of their foot soldiers from poor communities. Several government officials have asserted to me that poor rural counties have been the source ground of recruits for rural guerrilla organizations, including today's FARC and ELN, the Liberal and Conservative Guerrillas of the *Violencia* of the 50s, or the Liberal and Conservative guerrillas of 1900). However, the Colombian Army also recruits from many of the same rural poor counties, or from counties with nearly identical socio-economic profiles. Add to this the observation that the current war has not directly affected many dozens of poor rural counties in Colombia, whether or not they were venues of violence in the 1950s, and whether or not they are recruiting sources. I think it will be wiser for an overall understanding of the Colombian conflict to look beyond sociological and political-philosophical ingredients, not rejecting them, but remaining unsatisfied by them. On inspection of the geographic evidence, I think they tell us neither why Colombians fight, why they do not, nor where.

For instance, Colombian researchers have not clearly correlated counties suffering forced displacement of persons from their homes with counties that suffer economic disadvantage. (Gardeazábal 2002; Marquez 2004, p. 25; Acción Social 2010). The violence apparently does not correlate to varying types of land tenancy, either. (see Figure 14, p. 76) It is within this unsatisfying sea of contradictory or unsubstantiated causal assertions that this dissertation advances. The principal researchers responsible for the landmark study *Dinámica espacial de las muertes violentas en Colombia 1990-2005* (Spatial Dynamics of Violent Deaths in Colombia

1990-2005) highlight for reconsideration two common causal notions, one of which I mentioned earlier. One is related to poverty and the other to the cultural tendency toward violence. The comments of the investigators:

> "One commonplace public thought is that the violence is a generalized conduct that has registered a long continuity in the country, to the point that it becomes difficult to find a social sphere, geographical place or group of persons that has not been affected by it. As Eduardo Posada Carbó asserts, the nation is submitted almost daily to an argument that criminalizes it. For this author, stereotype is recurrent in news media columnists, prestigious intellectuals, and political leaders when they use the first person plural -- us -- to refer to the authors of the killings, converting all of us into a country of murderers, innate carriers of a malignant tradition."(Echandía, 36) (my translation)

The authors of *Spatial Dynamics* note that the volume and pace of Colombian violence shows inconsistencies both in time and space. The distribution of violence within the country, as borne out by spatial analysis, is not homogenous within Colombia. In fact, there are certain groups of counties within the country that show a persistency or reoccurrence of violence far greater than the country as a whole. Many counties have rarely experienced organized violence. A factor too often absent from public and academic discussions of victimization in Colombia, according to the authors, is its spatial contiguity with organized armed competition. That competition occurs among outlaw groups or between outlaw groups and the government. The authors wonder how it is that this does not appear more often in Colombian analyses, given that armed competition seems so obvious a potential contributor to worsening otherwise precarious social environments.

The *Spatial Dynamics* authors highlight the second current of what they consider Colombian groupthink by paraphrase,

> "originally there is a provocation to violence which is the consequence of political exclusion, poverty and the profound inequalities that constitute the 'objective causes' of the violence, that are exacerbated when the society sees its development blocked due to limitations that proceed from the social structures themselves, product of relationships based in inequality." (Echandía, 38) (my translation)

The country is not geographically homogenous as to violence or economic prosperity. According to a 2002 study covering 25 years from1975-2000 (Archila N., et al. 2002), there was little correlation between poor counties and violence in those counties, but there was some correlation between violence and counties that were doing better economically. While the notion of poverty causation has had great public acceptance and has greatly influenced Colombian politics, the empirical evidence supporting it is as difficult to interpret as it is scarce. In fact, the spatial data shows almost the opposite -- that many counties with the worst performance in terms of unsatisfied basic needs are over time often the most peaceful, while those counties showing relatively positive material performance are often the most violent. Similar correlations have been observed by others. (Echandía 2008, pp. 38, 47) There are ways to explain it away, perhaps noting that the participants in the violence are motivated by poverty, either their own or that of their fellow man, and their violent expression simply occurs where there is evident material wealth. An attractive logic, it is only poorly borne out by the spatial correlations. Many Colombians have opined to me that while the FARC and ELN have successfully recruited young men from poor rural zones, so has the Colombian army, and so has industry.

A Colombian Liberal would, historically, all else remaining the same, be likely to reject the central authority of Bogotá, the central government being more often than not Conservative and closely tied to the Catholic church. It is to be expected, and the maps of electoral choices by county seem to confirm, that centers of Liberal political preference could easily be remote counties. The Liberal place, from appearances, could very well be a remote place. Many of the leaders of Liberal guerrilla remnants of the *Violencia* of the 1950s had not received Hegelian centralist philosophies, right or left, with enthusiasm. So it was that the Liberal guerrillas and the budding Marxists suffered a falling out in Tolima. The residue of that conflict is understandable. While Liberal *colonos* (pioneers) might have gone to remote areas out of distaste for the central government, or more likely to escape local Conservative persecutions elsewhere, they were still part of the system. The new communist leaders had a taste for central government, and were in the remote areas because the central places were not yet theirs. The FARC's reasons for being in remote areas and the Liberals' reasons both involved survival, but their philosophical overlap was only partial at best. They Liberals did not place themselves in remote Colombia as a phase of preparation for some sort of counterattack. The communist guerrillas, however, soon made it their business to be *from* the remote areas, not just in them.

While some clear spatial differentials in social phenomena (such as material well-being) can be shown spatially (usually by county), the statistics that produce these spatial differentials are rarely drawn from or regarding the same individuals over time, especially in those counties that are most relevant to this study. Internal population displacement, both due to pressures from violence and to more peaceful motivations, confounds the longitudinal value of the data. Colombia would display a highly mobile population in the absence of internal conflict. In

addition, there are many locales in Colombia, rich and poor, that have experienced almost no organized violence, inviting the speculation that other factors are more significant.

Military technology as discontinuity

In the context of organized Colombian violence, technology has worked to increase and to decrease distances to the pursuers' culminating points. The balance of the two effects has changed over time. An increase in air mobility assets, for instance, can help those in pursuit escape many of the challenges presented to them by broken terrain. The helicopter can extend distances to pursuers' culminating points. It is only since the acceleration of Plan Colomboia in the early 2000s that the Colombian Army had sufficiently capable models in sufficient numbers to influence combat outcomes in the war. On the other hand, a fugitive force can use the landmine to decrease distance to a pursuer's culminating point. When the pre-FARC communist guerrillas eluded the oncoming units of the Colombian Army to escape Marquetalia in the early 1960s, the landmine was a novel item, and the artisanal processes used to make landmines were extremely dangerous. Alias 'Richard', an early guerrilla peer of Pedro Marín and for a short time the chief of the guerrilla band at El Pato, blew himself up while making landmines. By the 1980s, however, the FARC had adjusted landmine designs in order to produce the munitions locally in great numbers. The FARC tested input materials that could be easily smuggled and distributed, would withstand environmental degradation and would have a reliable effect. The FARC bred what some continue to call the 'improvised explosive device' into a sophisticated armament. FARC leaders recognized that the cottage industry landmine would augment the advantage that mountainous up-sloping terrain gave to the guerrilla.

Mass arrival of the helicopter is the most significant technological change favoring the government forces, although other technologies (notably remote sensing) have had a similar effect on government risk distances. The landmine is the most significant technological discontinuity favoring anti-government forces, but the FARC exploited other technologies specifically to extend distances to their own culminating points. The FARC used mules, donkeys and horses to this end. In a sense, the mule, helicopter, landmine and remote sensing can be considered to have had the same effect. They each changed the differential in risk distances between one rival and the other during movement.

Smuggling as continuity

Some places in Colombia, for instance the northern counties of Cauca Department, the Socorro area of Santander del Norte, the northern portion of the *Medio Magdalena* (middle reaches of the Magdalena River valley), to name a few, are constant focal points for violence. They are all either strategic communications nodes contested as such, or constitute escape geography where the fugitive force can gain a risk distance advantage over its chasing foe. Some areas of Colombia (many counties) have not seen violence in recent decades. It seems this is because they do not provide escape advantage, usually because they are not on the way to a sanctuary, nor are they on the way to or from a valuable commodity.

In the above discussion of continuities and discontinuities, I asserted that coveted geographies or the shifting of the locations of marketable commodities and their transportation routes and labor sources were a singularly important factor in Colombia's violence, especially as to where violence and its costs are to be borne and can be mapped. I highlight the FARC in this dissertation, because while it is one of many insurgent organizations to appear in Colombia, it

has had the most success. That success can be credited more-or-less to five factors -- military acumen of its leaders, financing, legitimacy, international support, and luck. Legitimacy is not a central concern of this research. As an abstraction often discussed in relation to insurgent social conflict it can mean popularity or public acceptance; or it can mean ideological purity or moral turpitude or any of these things as interpreted and influenced by the others. As a shorthand for all of the public psychologies that relate to the FARC, I believe, as do many, that the FARC enjoyed a great deal more of the quantity in the past than they do today, and that the quantity of legitimacy enjoyed or generated by the FARC diminished in positive correlation with its continuously more successful methods of financing. At first through taking villages, robbing banks and kidnapping rich people as did the old *bandoleros*, the FARC's reputation could grow on a Robin Hood thematic. Alfredo Molano, a well-known FARC apologist, states,

> "The guerrillas' rapprochement with coca also led to the belief that they are traffickers-narcoguerrillas. That notion is false, however. Cultivation of illegal crops was established in the colonization areas not simply because of weak army presence, but because the colonists were on the brink of ruin. And the guerrillas were in the colonized regions long before coca cultivation appeared. Their growth was due mainly to the repression unleashed against popular protest, and by the growing impoverishment of the population - not to their participation in the drug trade." (Molano, September 2000)

FARC targeting dipped deeper into the middle class as its kidnapping became routine. Public tolerance toward the FARC diminished somewhat as a result. It was not, however, until the rising curve of FARC logistic requirements crossed the abruptly diminishing curve of material support from a dying Soviet empire that FARC leaders made their Faustian bargain regarding the

drug trade. The FARC controlled remote territories, many of which were perfect for the cultivation and smuggling of coca. American counternarcotics successes in Peru and Bolivia were pushing the industry into Colombia, while American collaboration with the government of Colombia was placing greater stress on the illicit drug entrepreneurs to make new alliances for protection and international connections. (Thoumi 2002). Figures 89, 103, and 123 are photographs of the 1:500,000 Colombia wall map (Figure 4) with a plastic overlay from 2000 that the author obtained. That overlay was perhaps the most explicit American assertion regarding the extent of illicit crop cultivation in Colombia at the time. The process involved in its production was called 'blobology' after the shapes formed on the coca cultivation overlays. Competition over various data collection methods, including remote sensing, on-the-ground agricultural censuses, and expert opinion (especially from law enforcement officials), generated some beaurocratic friction. The blobological maps might relect some level of compromise among various counternarcotics offices, including those of the United States, the United Nations, and the Colombian government. The overlay I use here was derived from the same collection sources as the map offered in the United States Office of National Drug Control Policy, ONDCP, 2000 report. (Figure 11). The 2000 overlay and the ONDCP map indicate that circa 2000, at the height of the peace talks between the Colombian government and the FARC, coca cultivation was just accelerating in the center of the *Despeje* while the latter enjoyed unfettered control. *Despeje* translates literally as clearance. In Colombia, it now means a huge territory from which the government removed all of its armed forces including police in the Macarena/Caguán/Guaviare area.

Coca cultivation was also accelerating in the Catatumbo, Southern Bolivar (Sierra San Lucas) and Arauca areas, all controlled by the guerrillas or paramilitaries. The total acreage

under coca cultivation had more than doubled in fewer than five years. The only large growing areas where the cultivation acreage did not increase was in eastern Caquetá and Guaviare -- decreases that can be credited directly to the successful government reaction to the FARC occupation of Mitú and of Operation Gato Negro, discussed later in this dissertation. In summary, in areas with significant presence of the FARC or its allies, especially in the *Despeje* and along the borders with Venezuela and Ecuador, the coca crop appeared or increased. Where the Colombian military had enjoyed some military successes against the FARC along the river extraction routes, the coca cultivation acreage diminished. The spatial record (as with all other evidence) shows the presence of the FARC to have been intimately correlated to the cocaine business. All evidence also shows that the FARC became spectacularly wealthy as commodity industrialists.

Terrain ruggedness has been shown to correlate spatially with violence in Colombia (Fowler, 2012, p. 146), but it is an imperfect correlation. Colombia's international borders also correlate spatially to organized violence, the borders only intermittently drawn along rugged terrain. However, for guerrillas and smugglers to survive, they must seek geographical contexts likely to favor them as to the immediate balance of power as they escape to sanctuary. Terrain ruggedness contributes to change that balances in favor of the fugitive in almost the same way as an international boundary or jungle expanse. Meanwhile, a community located along a route of recurrent escape and pursuit may display an absence of government services relative to more centralized, more urbanized communities. The same community may also evidence relative material under-performance. A mountain community's relative material poverty might be related to the rugged terrain in which it finds itself; the quotidian economic cost distances might be substantially greater than in less peripheral urban areas. Two effects of rugged terrain --

relative material impoverishment of the local community and tactical assistance to fugitives -- may occur in the same mountainous counties, but that coincidence of effects hardly argues that the former causes the latter. I believe this dissertation makes a compelling argument that certain geographical phenomena, plentiful in Colombia, have served to prolong the armed conflict, not because of the influence of those geographical phenomena on socio-economic performance, but almost entirely due to their direct effect on armed competitive outcomes.

Geography versus democracy versus demography

I will take some liberty here in defining a selection of political philosophical outlooks or categories of political mind-sets. Their definition is not the purpose of the research, and not a centrally important element of its design or result. They should, however, facilitate explanation of the dissertation's theory regarding distance. If we could map that space in the ideological firmament where anarchism and libertarianism range, the resulting image might be finely parsed, irregular, with overlapping territories of thought, and the map quickly would obsolesce. A Venn diagram of anarchism, libertarianism, and individualism would show considerable overlap, with violence but a sliver of the whole. Because there are and have been violent 'propagandists of the deed' who call themselves anarchists and because that kind of anarchist is a staple character in irregular wars, violent anarchism tends to become conflated with its more peaceful shades, tainting anyone who would advertise themselves as an anarchist. In Colombia few admit to anarchy and, as in other parts of the world, we can assume that an anarchist would find common ground with a Marxist while sharing their struggle against the structure. Once the time came to take the reins of governance and act as nucleus of the vanguard, however, those of an anarchist tilt might not get along well with the Marxist-tending-toward-Communist. In Colombia, much

of the internal dispute about the amount of centralized power versus diffuse power, can be seen in the messy internal history of the EPL, one of the revolutionary guerrillas that ultimately turned its weapons in and all but threw itself into the dustbin of history.

As noted earlier, the official, formalized administrative division of Colombian space descends in scale from nation to department to county, sometimes with province in between the county and the department. Sometimes the counties form county associations. Sometimes the counties are contiguous with tribal or ethnic boundaries and sometimes not. The county has become the principal statistical container and guide for democratic representation. Sometimes voting and gerrymandering are disputed at the next level down from the county, the v*eredas*. Water matters often follow, (due to the extent of watersheds or to the extent of water provision districts) the various administrative units just mentioned. There exist in Colombia a set of *Corporaciones Autónomas Regionales* (autonomous regional corporations, CAR) that are established by law, have their own budgets and administrative hierarchy, are organized according to environmental regions (large watersheds mostly) and enjoy a mandate to protect the natural environment. In a way they are equivalent to the Environmental Protection Agency. A national requirement holds all counties to produce a land-use plan, which is to be reviewed and approved by the respective CSR. Thus explicit interest in the geography of common effort is generated at the county level. Also, the CAR bureaucrats develop practical professional relationships with county officials. It appears this may be giving a county's CAR as much or more political influence in that county as has the respective departmental government.

Many national government distributions, particularly royalties from the hydrocarbon industry, go directly to the counties. How much and to which counties is a matter of central government political negotiation and intrigue, which thus fuels interest in the democratic

representation. It also fuels interest in controlling county governments directly, extorting those in control of a county government, or creating new counties to control.

We are currently witnessing a round of battles to control local governments at the county level in the most conflictive regions of the country. Simultaneously, we see efforts to create new forms of communally owned space that will be administratively autonomous from the local county government but nevertheless hold dominating political influential in that government. The FARC, and a number of proponents that we can fairly characterize as prefering centralized land-use problem solving, are promoting entities called the *zonas de reservas campesinas* (peasant reservation zones). C*ampesino,* and apparently *desplazado* (internally displaced person) and the even more abstract *víctima* (victim) have in Colombian political Spanish come to replace *proletariat* and *worker* as the non-geographic collective identities that the radical left argues to represent. A tension exists between participation in the established democratic representation scheme and a revindicative collective identity (*campesino* or peasant in this case). That tension manifests itself within the overlapping challenges of land restitution and the national peace process. Many of the obvious candidates for membership in the above-mentioned but geographically undefined collectives (peasants) wish for stronger place-based identities, that is, they want to regain or establish new roots and deepen them in a fixed place. They seek some geographic stability. Because the FARC has a mindset of territorial military strategy, a growing precision is revealing itself in its arguments about where the *zonas de reservas campesinas* should be located. The FARC leaders, as others, wish to assume the role of exclusive agent of the otherwise placeless collectives. The FARC may not call themselves the nucleus of the vanguard, but they will wish to retain as many of the reins over the land rights of their peasant followers as can be negotiated. It will not surprise Colombians if the basket of controlling rights

gained by the FARC approaches that which the historic *hacendados* (plantation owners) might have held. Meanwhile, the proposed *zonas de reserva campesina* almost all seem to be militarily favorable, or smuggling-favorable, to the FARC. The FARC leaders seek to own the best geography of impunity.

The government's land restitution programs and projects manifest the dynamic friction between place-based and abstract identities, and between free market and collectivized decision-making. Parallel to the various government restitution programs are others involving commercial efforts to buy nearby agricultural land and move agricultural labor. It is difficult to determine much less describe the exact contents of the basket and distribution of the rights and duties that the *zonas de reservas campesinas* will ultimately entail. What seems to be afoot is a fantastical and complex game of armed land-chess. Constant, however, is a visible, patent coincidence. The areas in play include the same areas of clandestine transport and escape, and especially those leading to or along the national borders. It may be that the FARC is simply attempting to consolidate some political base in the lands where it has longest been present, or it may be they cannot discard the urge to build lines of communication to sanctuary, to build spaces of impunity. True anarchists will always favor building spaces of impunity. They will see little reason for the central government to have any local authority at all, but they may not abide the building of utopian socialist haciendas. The true smugglers are always at odds with the ideological organizers.

The proposed *campesino* reservations are in every explanation a form of communal ownership, perhaps communes, perhaps more like the Mexican agrarian nuclei or like Israeli kibbutzim, but for some observers they will most closely approach the ownership model of the existing *comunidades negras* or *reservas indígenas*. For some they are just agricultural

cooperatives. To the less enthusiastic they are no better than re-imaged versions of the 1960s *repúbliquetas independientes* of the early FARC and pre-FARC legend. (figures 73, p. 206; 74, p. 207) FARC control over the *zonas de reservas campesinas* would, to the skeptics, be nothing less than victory for the FARC leadership, who according to their own demands at the current peace talks in Cuba, place themselves and their lieutenants as exclusive representatives of the *campesinos*. The definition of 'campesino' then becomes a rural, agriculturalist Colombian who is represented by the FARC. Figure 15 shows national parks, indigenous reservations, black communal lands and an estimate of the proposed extent of the *zonas de reservas campesinas* based on theVelasco rendering . (Figure 21, page 109). Whether or not the peasant reservation proposals are realized, a large, but as yet uncertain portion of Colombia's rural land will be communally owned in one way or another. There appears to be a strong correlation between counties where peasant reservations are proposed with Colombia's habitually conflictive areas. A skeptic might conclude that the word *campesino* means a rural person dependent on a violent smuggling organization. The peasant lives in the best smuggling regions where the terrain and international boundaries collude to provide greater impunity to fugitives. If that skepticism is warranted, and peasant reservation zones are in fact only a ploy for territorial control, then the peasant reservations project bodes poorly for the lives of rural agriculturalists who find themselves labeled *campesinos* and living in those areas. According to this view, the FARC is purposing peasant reservations zones as geographies for their impunity.

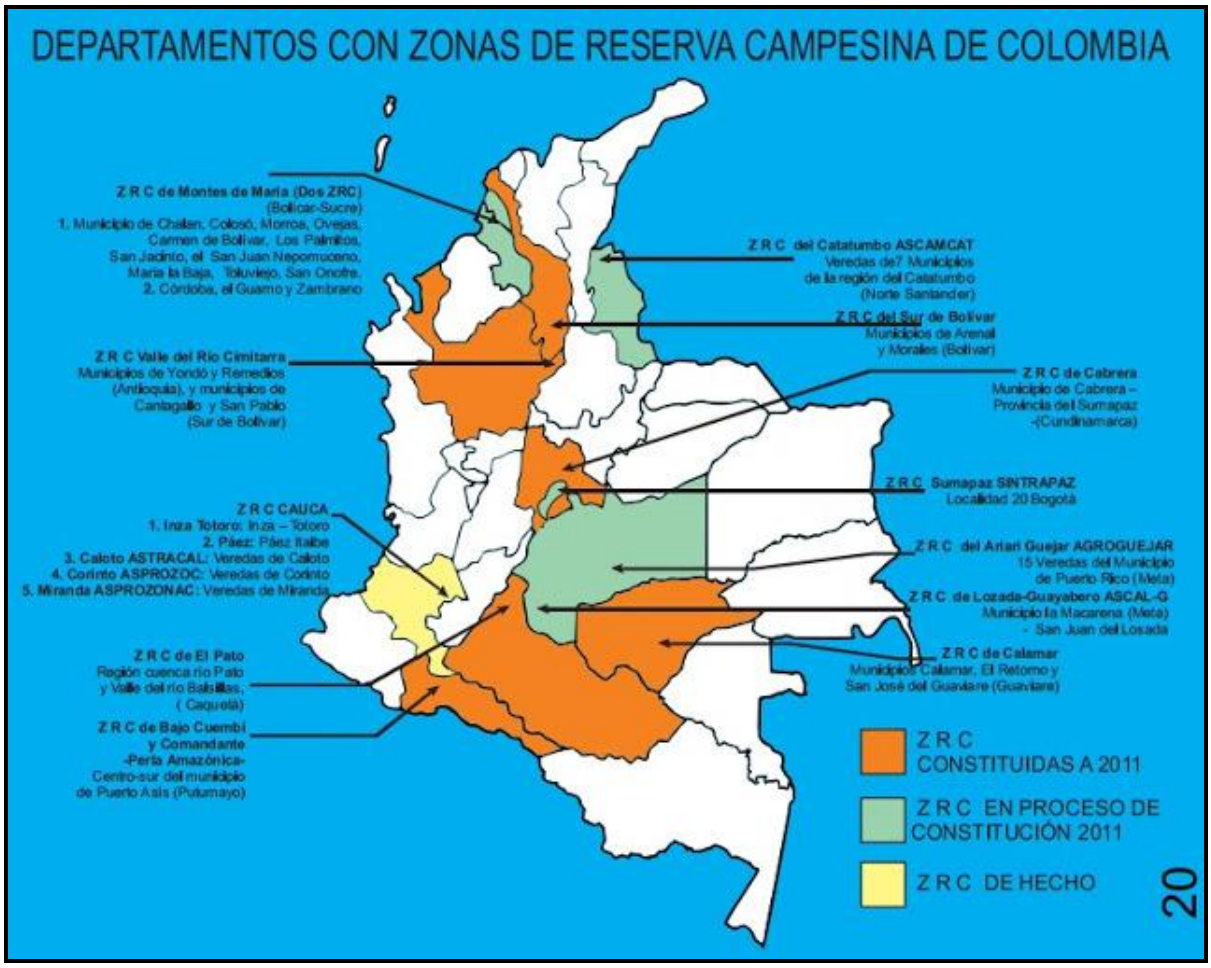


Figure 19: Peasant Reservation Zones (*Confidential Colombia*, August 2013, citing "ANZORC") The title translates to, "Departments with Colombian Peasant Reservation Zones." Orange is for departments with zones (ZRC) constituted in 2011, green is for those in the process of constitution in 2011, and yellow (Cauca only) is for already existing zones. Counterclockwise from the top left are Montes de Maria; Valle del Rio Cimitarra (southern Bolivar and eastern Antioquia); Cauca; El Pato (Caquetá); Calamar (Guaviare); La Lozada-Guayabero (Meta); del Ariari Guejar (Meta) Sumapaz (Cundinamarca); Cabrera (Cundinamarca); Sur de Bolivar (Bolivar); Sur de Bolivar (Bolivar); and the Catatumbo (Norte de Santander). Each entry includes participatory counties (*municipios*) or townships (*veredas*). They are all in highly conflictive areas. ANZORC stands for the National Association of Peasant Reservation Zones.

Figure 20: Peasant Reservation Zones (*Caracol* July 2013) The information in this map concords approximately with that given by the map in Figure 19. Notably, this map omits Cauca and the Catatumbo. This map provides additional information on numbers of peasants involved, acerage, and regulatory identification.

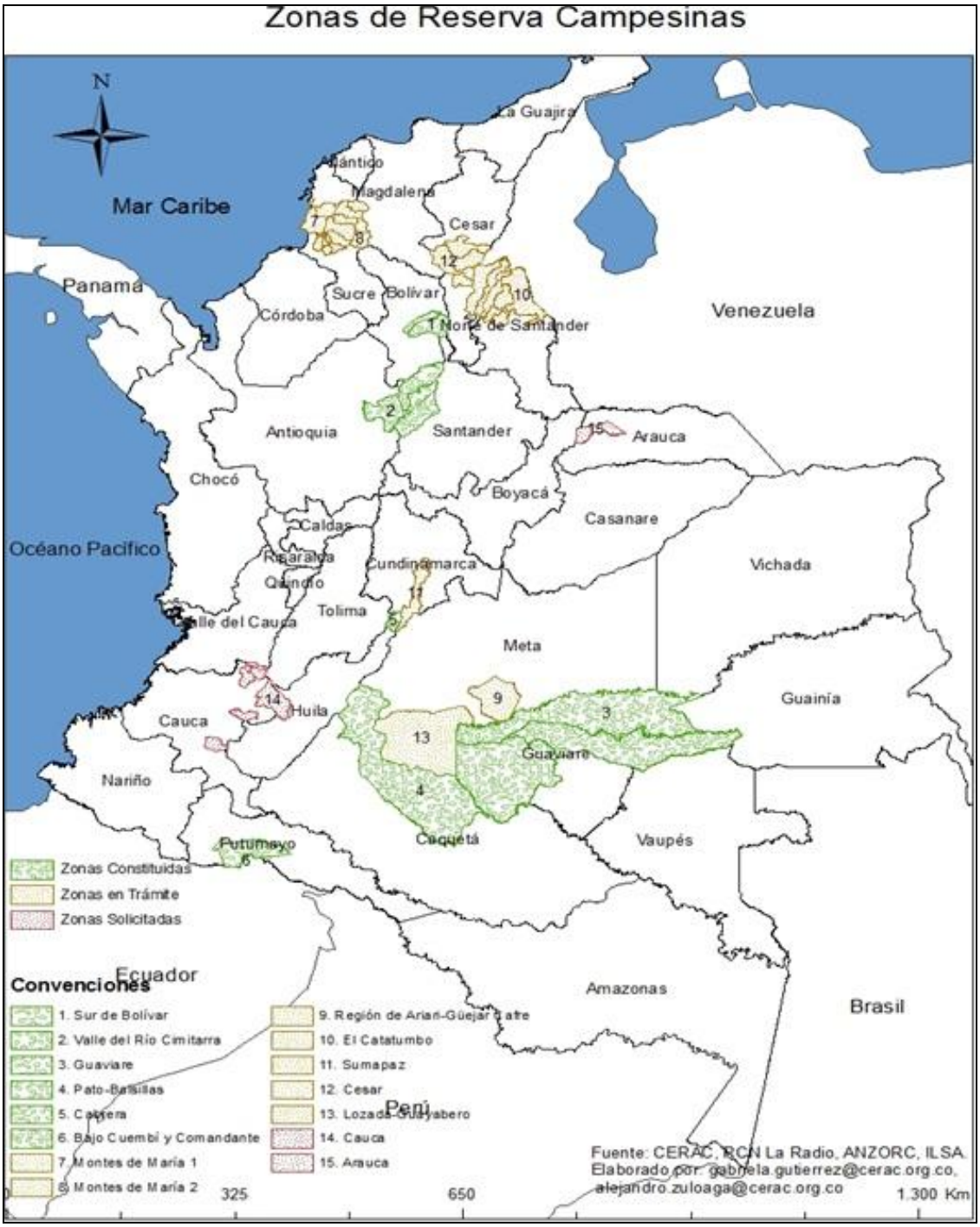


Figure 21: Peasant Reservation Zones (Velasco June 2013, June 2013b) Shown by county, this is the most precise rendition. The green-colored counties have zonas constituidas (zones in being); yellow are zonas en trámite (zones in bureaucratic processing), and dark red have *zonas solicitadas* (zones requested or petitioned). Notable is the 2013 expansion of this concept in the Catatumbo region.

Why is the war?

> "The territorial imperative is as blind as a cave fish, as consuming as a furnace, and it commands beyond logic, opposes all reason, suborns all moralities, strives for no goal more sublime than survival." (Ardrey 1966, p. 236).

I do not know why Colombians are at war with one another, but I suspect Robert Ardrey makes a useful observation about human territoriality. Many factors intervened during a century from the time of the War of the Thousand Days to the present to change the spatial distribution of violence in Colombia. Medical advancement against tropical lowland diseases is one, for instance. However, the spatial distribution of organized violence seems mostly to have changed in accordance with changes in the spatial distribution of commodities. Colombians fight over things of value. These are indeed 'socio-economic' influences, but the term 'socio-economic' like 'culture', can contain everything and anything. Socio-economic causation theories have been offered to argue or imply that the violence in Colombia is caused by socio-economic underperformance or socio-economic egoism -- particularly that egoism inflicted by a strictly definable class of oligarchs or plutocrats on larger classes of downtrodden have-nots. Marxist perspectives often inform these viewpoints, mildly or stridently, and the Marxist argument generally entails at least a nod to dialectic insistence regarding the history of resistance in Colombia. These perspectives would tie, if only the facts would allow, all of Colombian violence to a single historical byline. While it can hardly be doubted that powerful Colombians have dominated less powerful Colombians, I have found little evidence of class warfare in Colombia's past conflicts. Admittedly, my Rorschach blotches do not easily show me class warfare, but at least in the War of the Thousand Days there is hardly a hint. There are historical

exceptions and it is from the *Violencia* of the 1950s that the organized armed left emerges. If, however, it were not for the economic possibilities afforded to the guerrillas by a small set of commodities and by other geographic factors that favored escapes, the class warfare model would be under-represented in Colombia as compared to other countries in the region and the world. Figure 22 displays a curiously exteme statistic. Apparently, Colombia has a high level of human development relative to most other countries suffering internal conflicts, but suffers more landmines. If one were to take this chart as the only data from which to draw a conclusion, that conclusion would have to be that scoring higher on the human development index would be a dangerous aspiration for a country.

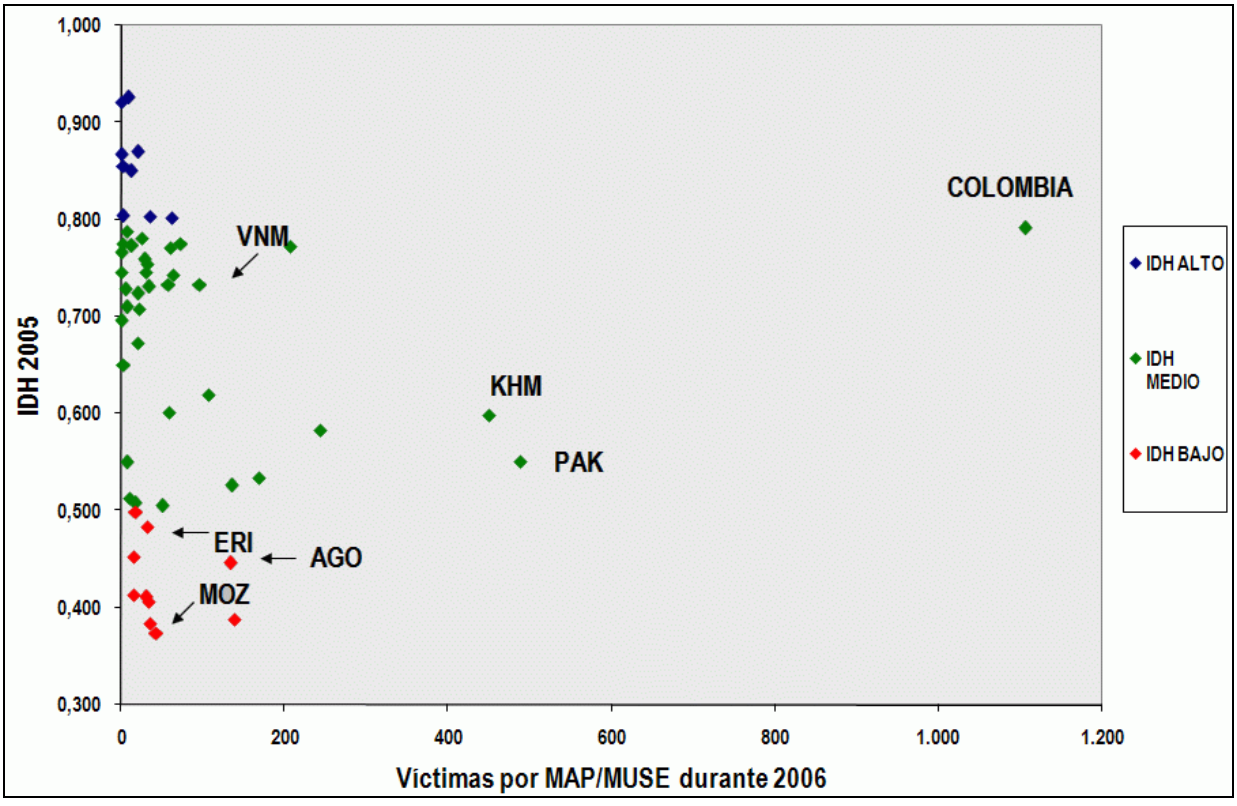


Figure 22: World Human Development Index for 2005 versus number of landmine victims in 2006. (Consejo Nacional de Política Económica Y Social, CONEPS 2009) Blue represents a high Human development, green a middle level of development and red the lowest level. I believe the indicated country codes are as follows PAK=Pakistan; MOZ=Mozambique; KHM=Cambodia; VNM=Vietnam; ERI=Eritrea; and AGO=Angola. MAP/MUSE stands for anti-personnel mines and unexploded munitions.

Where in Colombia is it remote?

A number of influences bear on the creation or preservation of remote spaces within Colombia, which today are easy to read cartographically, at least in general terms. The national parks mentioned in the introduction have been increasingly well-defined as Colombia advances in applying GIS systems to legal, legislative and administrative land-use matters. In addition to the country's larger national parks, concerns about the protection and definition of indigenous communal lands, black communal lands and a complicated regime of environmental protection concepts also contribute to a Colombian national mapping and preservation of rural space. Spatial correspondence of the national parks with transportation remoteness is evident in Figures 23 through 27. Figure 27 shows three major forms of communal land ownership -- national parks, black communal lands and indigenous reservations along with the major roads. The three communal property types differ as to the intentions of their creators, their active constituent communities of advocates, and the desires of their occupants as to future rights and land-use. Evidenced by the road network, they are mostly remote.

Figure 28 zooms the elevation model to south-central Colombia to show an area that is transportation remote. While transportation remoteness may correlate with lower economic performance statistics (especially according to urbanite material measures), we might better explain the violence that some rural people in Colombia suffer by the location of their homes in areas coincidentally preferred as guerrilla sanctuaries (or routes to and from those sanctuaries).

The Nevado del Huila area is among the areas that guerrillas have preferred most. The Nevado del Huila area is perhaps paradigmatic of zones wherein rural communities might suffer a greater likelihood of mass violence because the area offers uphill escape options and sits between jungle sanctuaries to the east and cities and ports to the west. Unlike many others of the

most violently contested areas, however, the Nevado del Huila is not near an international border. It is, for Colombian smugglers and guerrillas, the remote rural middle of the country. It is the birth zone of the FARC.

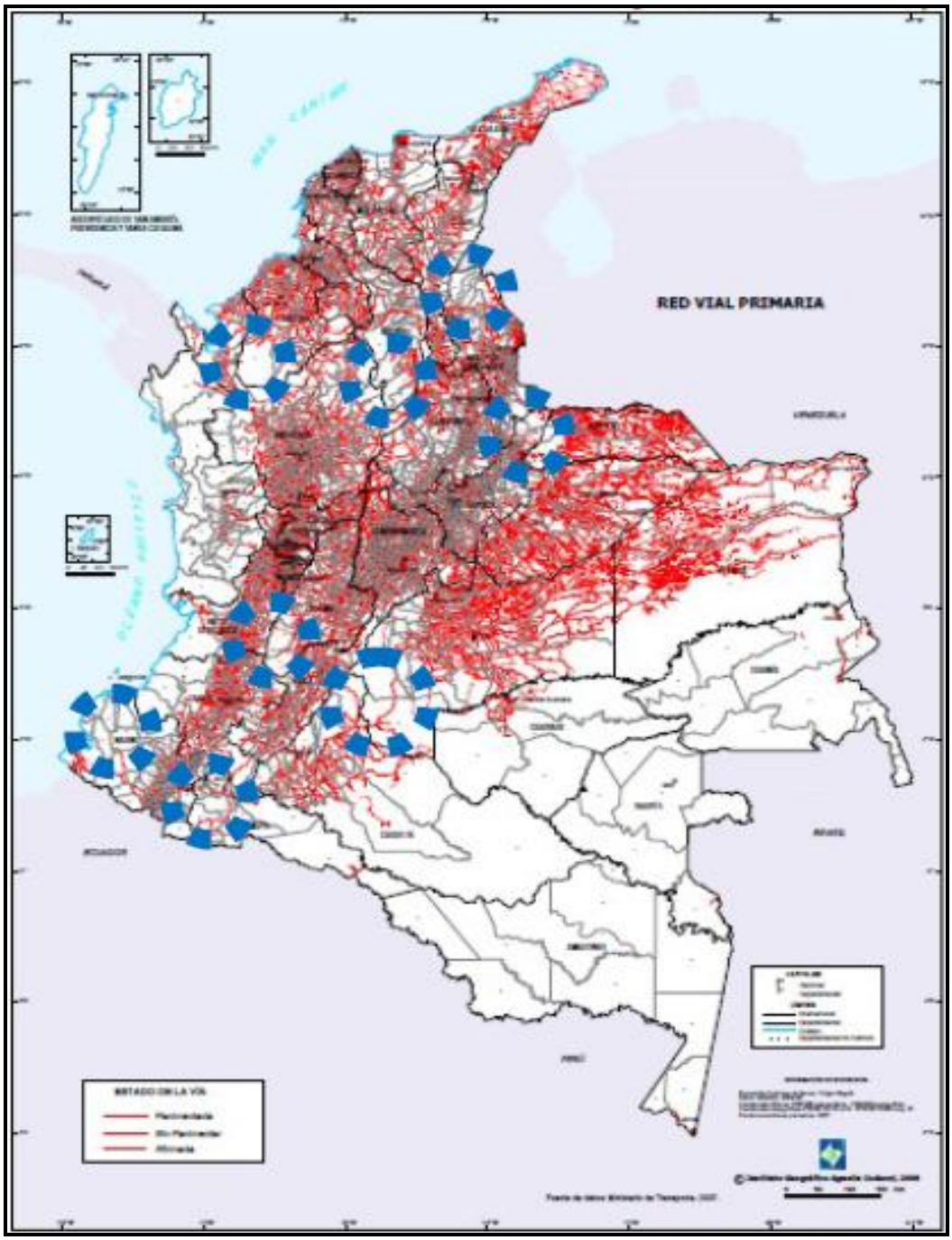


Figure 23: A government strategy map asserting a correlation of remote areas to conflict using the road network. (Unidad Administrativa Especial 2012) On this map, the government agency highlights what it identifies as security priority zones using the blue circles. The road network is in red and the grey lines are county boundaries.

Figure 23: A government strategy map asserting a correlation of remote areas to conflict using the road network. (Unidad Administrativa Especial 2012) On this map, the government agency highlights what it identifies as security priority zones using the blue circles. The road network is in red and the grey lines are county boundaries.

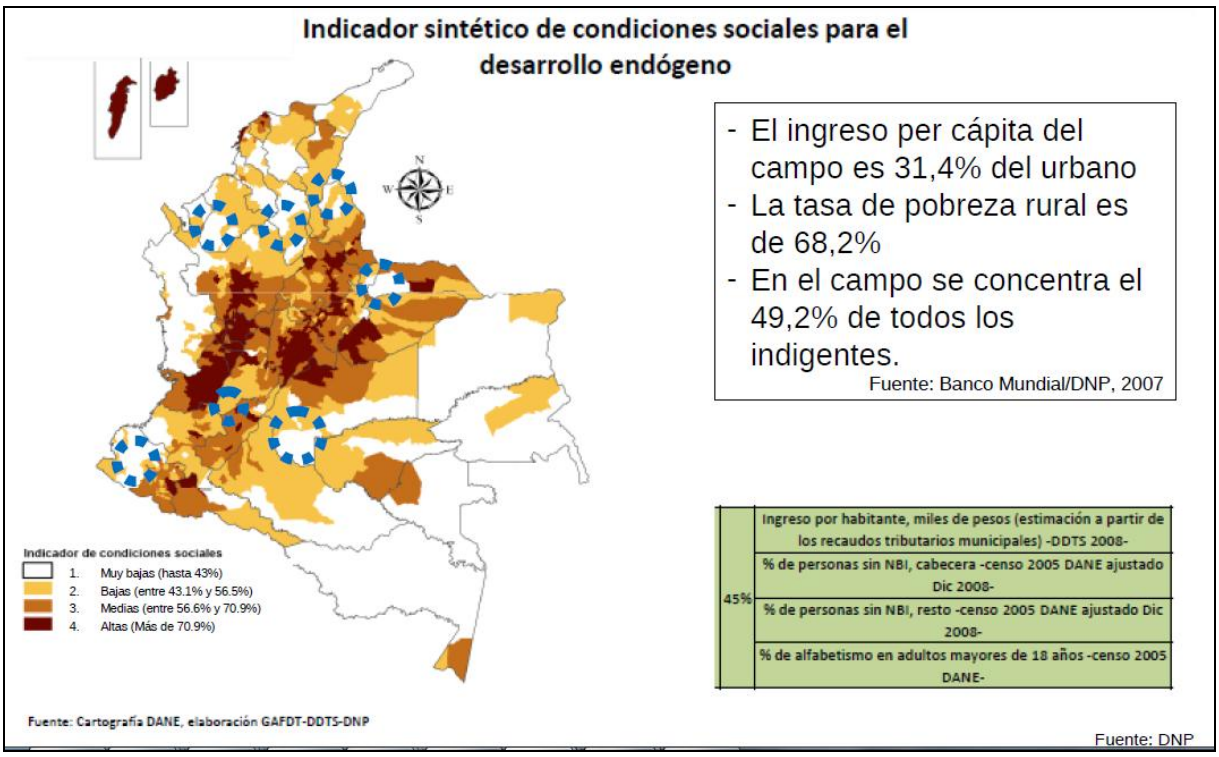


Figure 24: The title translates to "Synthesized indicator of social conditions for endogenous development." This Colombian rendering proceeds from that in Figure 21, implying that the remoteness causes the poverty that causes the conflict. (Unidad Administrativa Especial 2012). In the four color legend, (1.) is Very Low (below 43%) [Meaning, according to the social conditions index, which is not cited, that the white areas exhibit the lowest overall material well-being] (2.) is Low; (3.) is Moderate; and (4.), in the darkest brown, is High. The white cut-out box in the upper left tells us that per-capita income in rural areas is 31.4% of what it is in urban areas; that the rural poverty rate is 68.2 %; and that 49.2% of all indigent [abjectly poor] live in the countryside. I include this map not for the data it presents per se, but as a typical Colombian perception regarding the relationship of poverty to remoteness and remoteness to the organized violence. The blue circles (same as in Figure 23) propose to highlight areas of poverty that coincide with holes in the road network and that coincide with areas of violence.

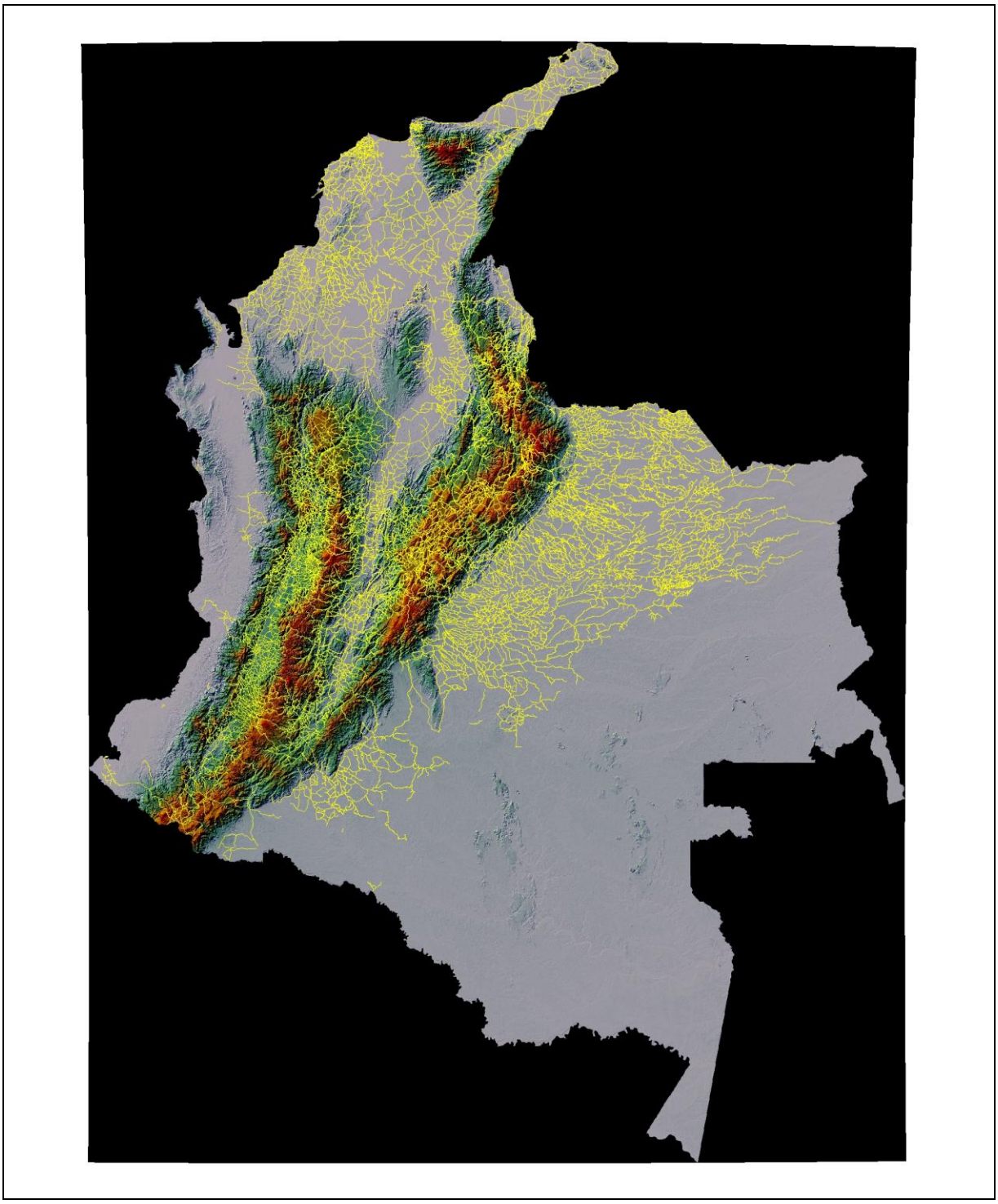


Figure 25: Elevation model and national road network. (SIGOT 2013) In this rendering I represent the road network (same basic data as in Figure 21) in yellow.

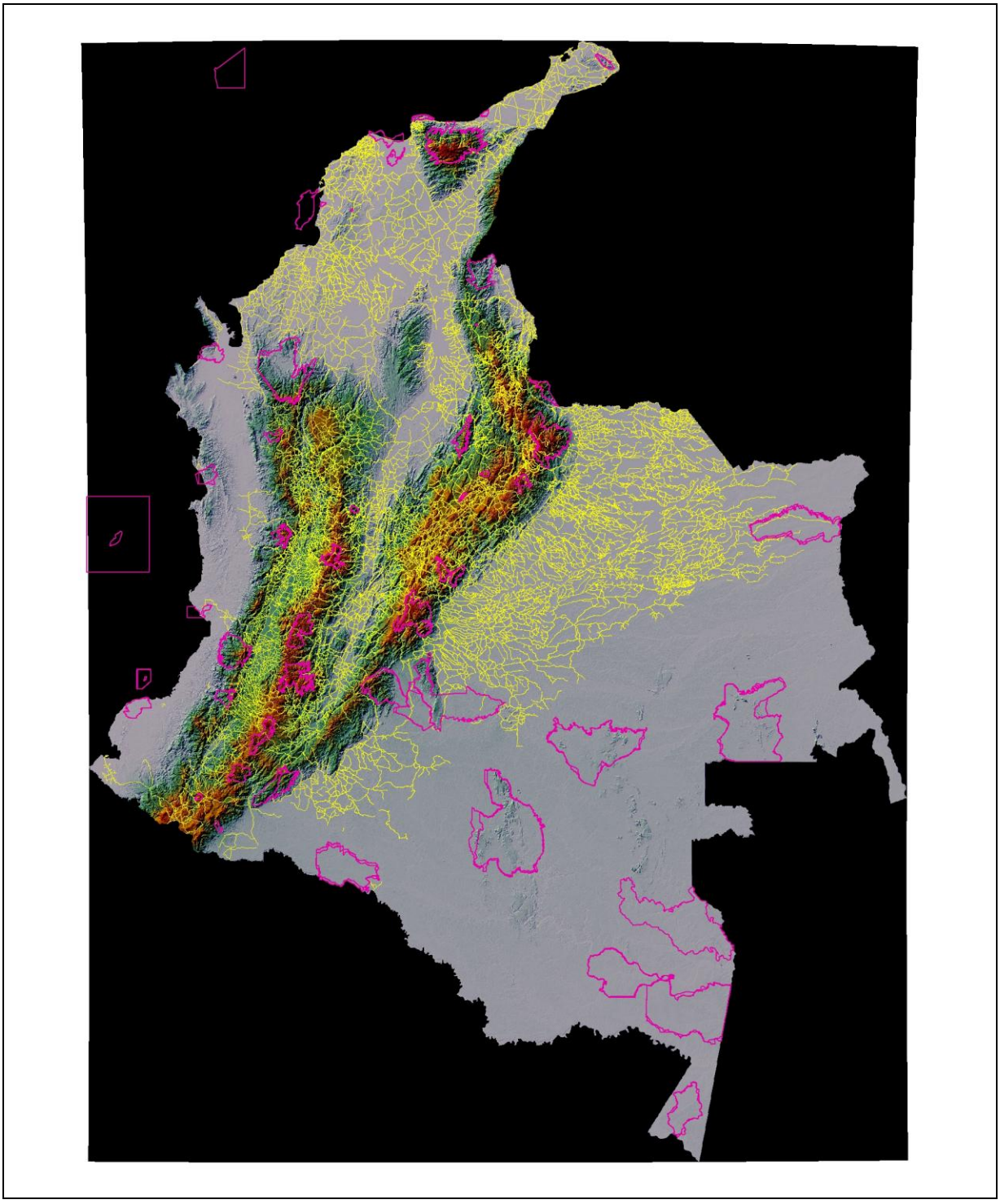


Figure 26: Elevation model, national road network and major national parks. (using ArcGIS with base data from SIGOT 2013).

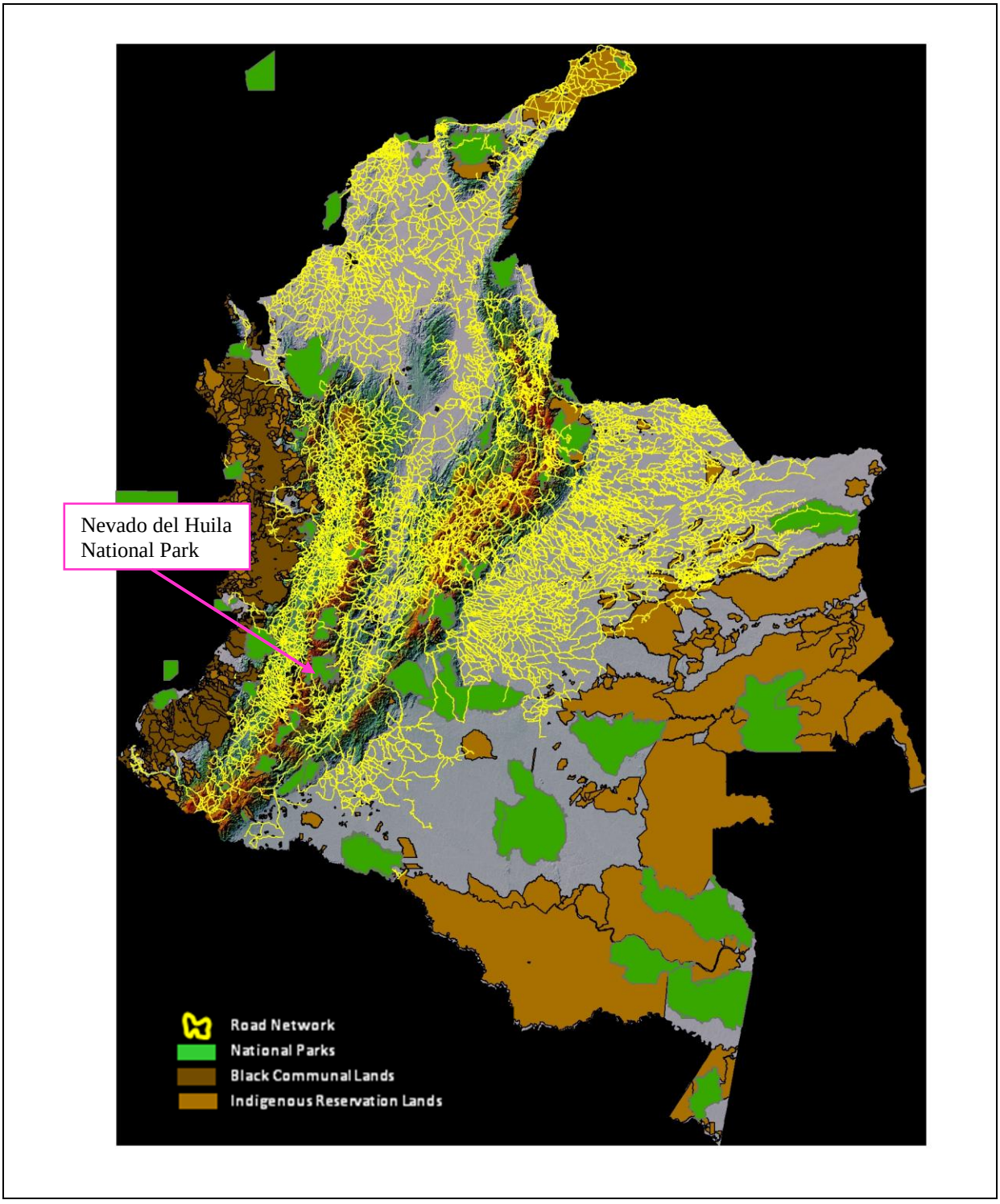


Figure 27: Roads, parks, Indigenous communal lands and *Afrodecendiente* communal lands. (using ArcGIS with base data from SIGOT 2013) The Nevado del Huila National Park is highlighted for orientation, as it is a focal point for discussion later in the text.

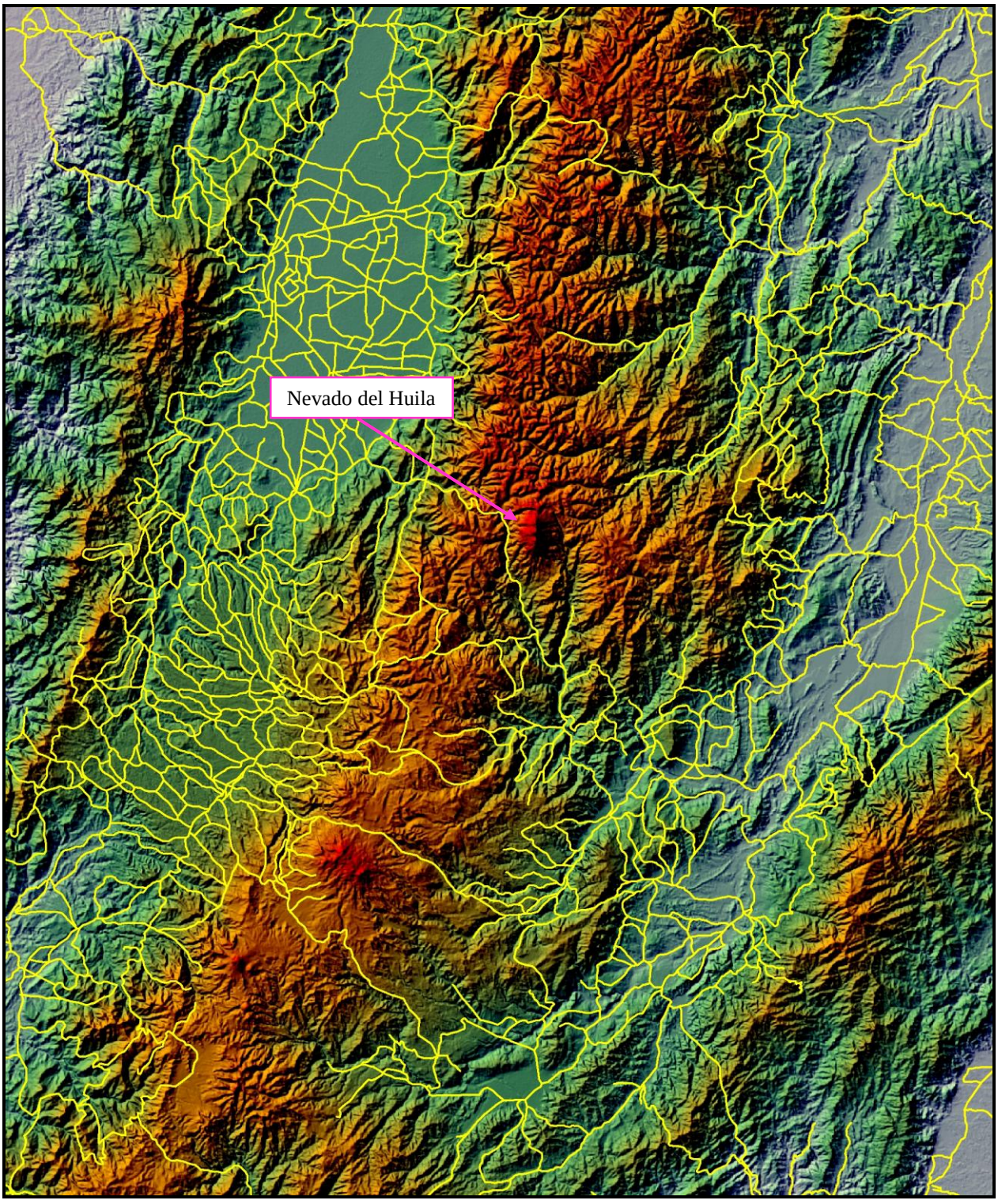


Figure 28: Road network around the Nevado del Huila volcano. (using ArcGIS with base data from SIGOT 2013) The Nevado del Huila area is further discussed later in the text.

Where is the war?

Testing the explanatory value of a theory of distance using Colombia's internal warring demands a significant intermediate question -- 'where in Colombia is the Colombian war?' Several phenomena serve to depict the armed conflict spatially, to map where within Colombia is the war. I divide the Colombians' answers into two groups. The first includes presentation of the spatial distribution of the costs of the war, and the second includes depictions used in explanation of some plan or strategy that directly asserts the war's location. In the first category, 'costs' include landmines; significant combat actions; massacres; murders; forced displacements from homes, ecological destruction, etc. The second category includes areas of the country that Colombian institutions and scholars have asserted as strategic priorities for dealing with the war and its costs.

According to Costs

Figures 29 through 44 relate Colombian attempts to depict the spatial distribution of the war according to its costs.

Kidnapping is a phenomenon commonly used to describe the nature, scale, intensity and costs of the war. Kidnapping is extremely hard to pinpoint geographically. Figure 29 indicates a concentration in the far northeast, in Cesar Department around Valledupar along the Venezuelan border. Other apparent concentrations correspond to the three largest cities, Bogotá, Medellín and Cali. The area around Medellín, in Antioquia Department in the northwest, appears to have suffered a relatively greater number of kidnappings. One might reasonably conclude from this distribution that the kidnappings follow population, money, and escape. However, kidnappers purposefully vary the places they use to take hostages and keep their prison locations secret.

Victim families and companies often prefer to pay ransoms and avoid what they feel might be a mortally ineffective intervention by the government. (Posada 2002). As a result, kidnappings are under reported, and hard to map visually with any confidence of precision or comprehensiveness.

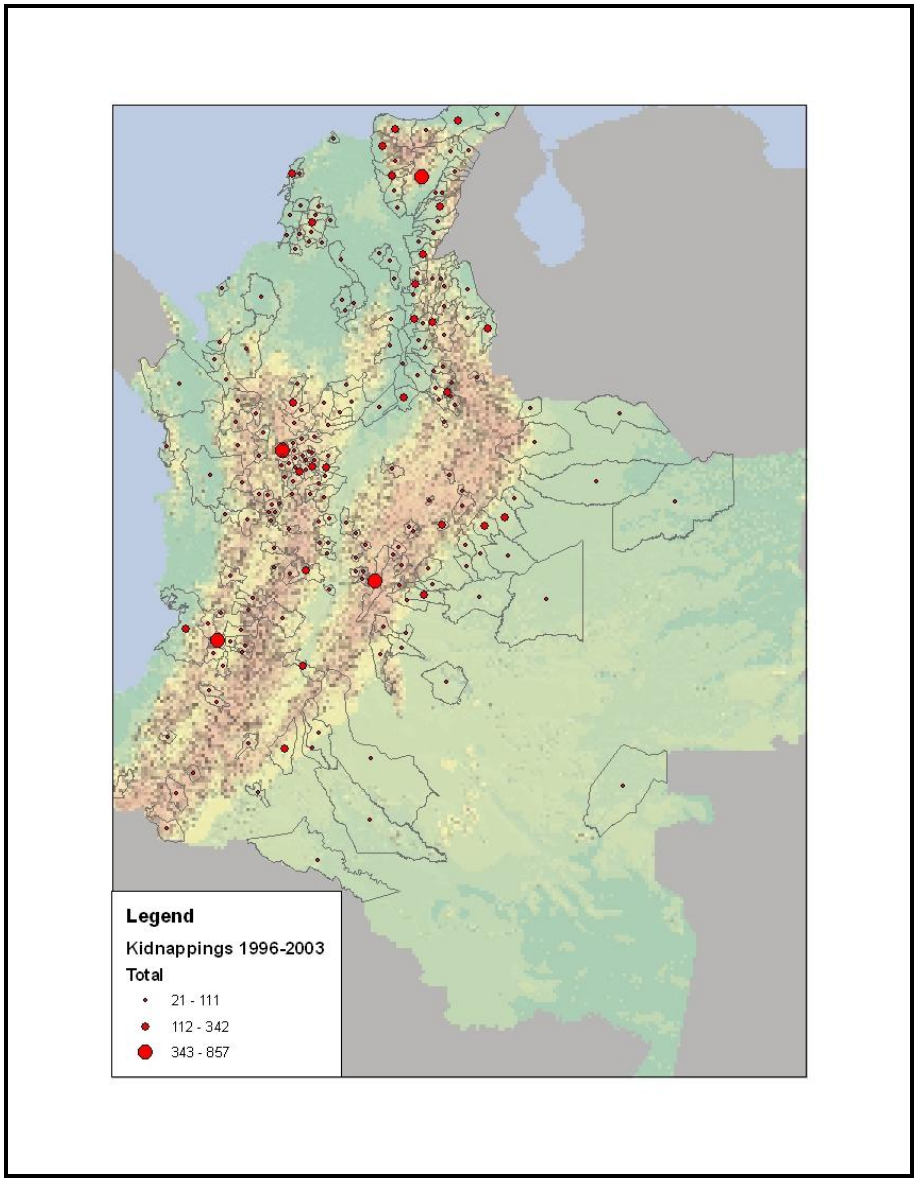


Figure 29: Kidnappings in Colombia 1996-2003. (CERAC 2013).

Sexual violence has become another cost of the war discussed by Colombians. (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica 2013, p. 77). While I did not find a suitable spatial distribution

for sexual violence, Colombians have alleged that it corresponds to forced displacements. We can safely surmise that, with few exceptions, the perpetration of direct sexual violence is mostly a male phenomenon. The war in general is highly gender-specific. The rate of male deaths attributable to the war is about twenty times that of female deaths. (Figure 30) The rate of perpetrations of violent death is about 200 times greater for males, and males perpetrate almost all of the sexual violence. In some local areas of Colombia, the demographic differential between men and women varies more than thirty-five percent. (Figure 31) At first glance, there appears to be a correlation between county masculinity and county violence indices, but I did not discover a suitable study examining the issue.

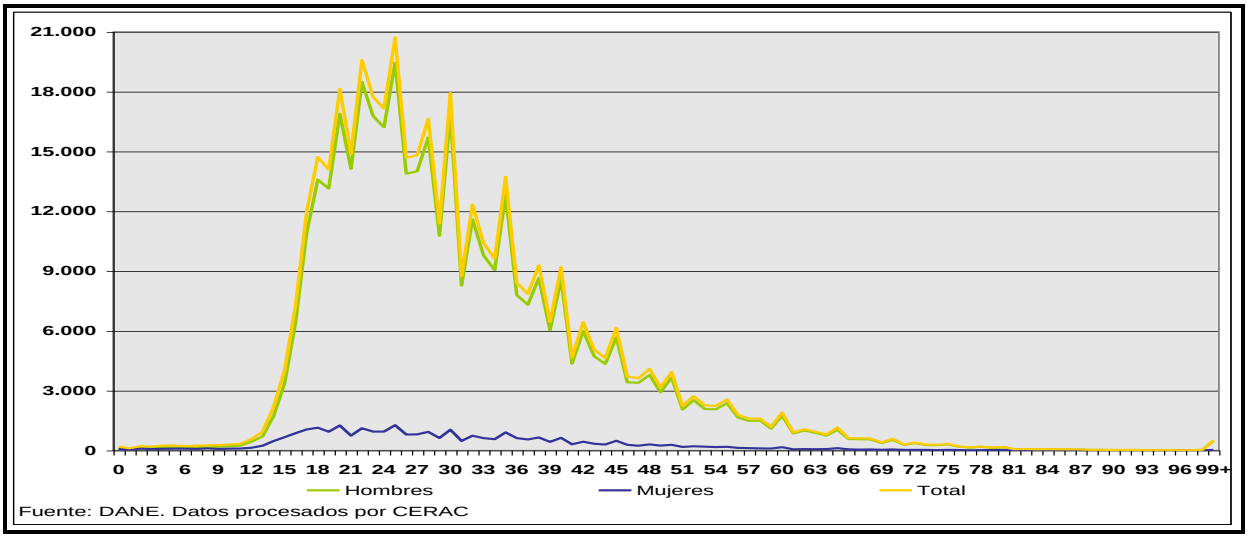


Figure 30: Male versus female deaths by age in Colombia's War. (CERAC 2006). The blue line is for female deaths, the green for male, and the yellow the total. Police officials related to me that a high percentage of the female deaths were 'trophy' or 'harem' kills, that is, the murder of female members of rival gangs. I believe the policemen intended to imply that the majority of the females were not killed in shootouts, but were passive victims in most cases rather than equal participants. I did not see statistics or written reports to substantiate this claim.

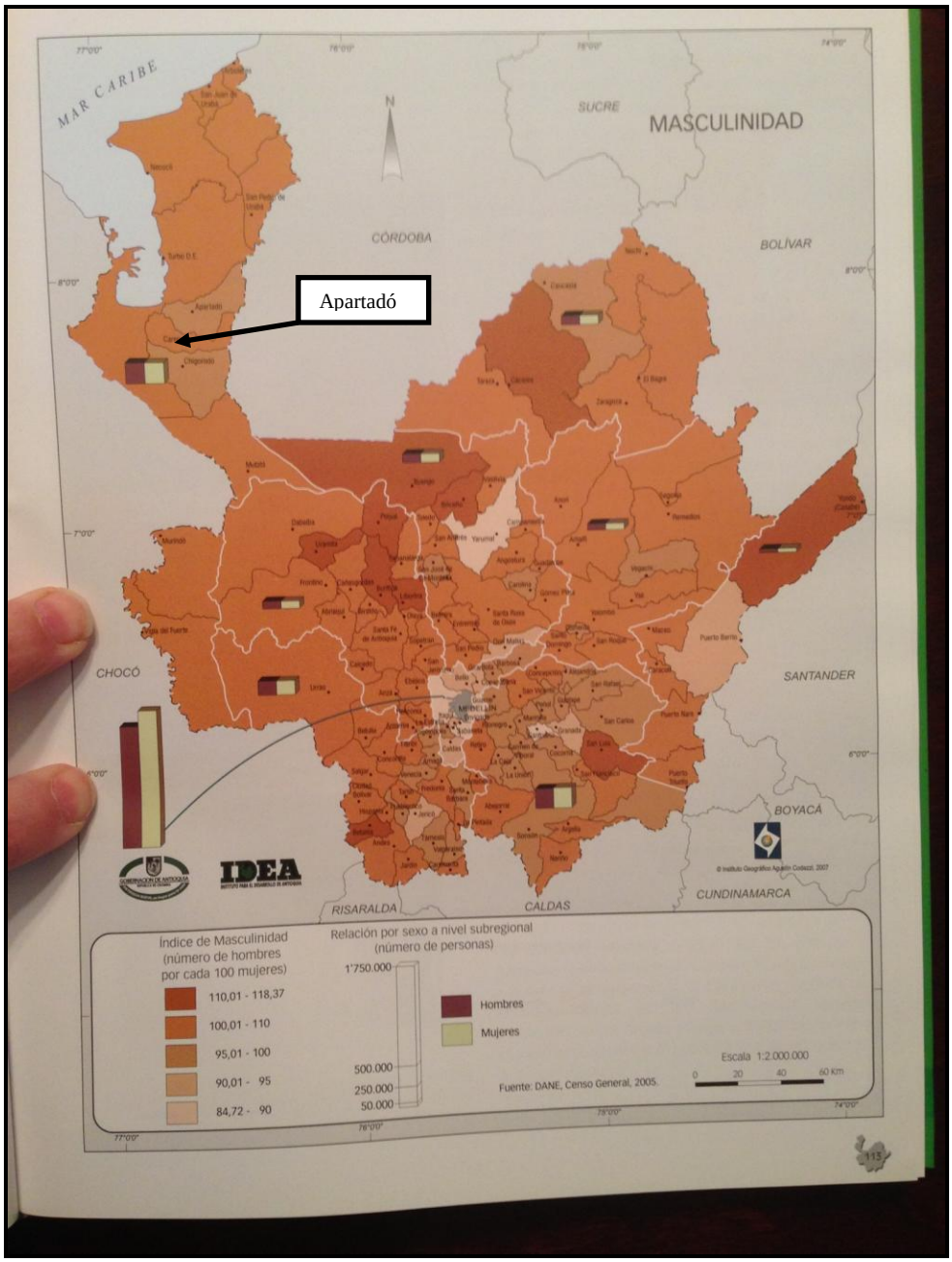


Figure 31: Masculinity of counties in Antioquia. (Instituto Para el Desarrollo de Antioquia 2007). The maroon bar columns are male population and the light green are female. The color ramp rises from less masculine to more. The most masculine counties (burnt orange) are as high as 118 men to 100 women and the least masculine (pink) as low as 85 men to 100 women. Any assertion of a correlation with violence is subject to challenge as numerous other variables, including economic opportunities, active paramilitary and guerrilla recruiting, etc. may impose.

Ecological destruction is an oft-noted cost of the war in Colombia. It is subject to a wide range of definitions, and because there are so many agents of ecological destruction, it is hard to

separate out those that can be logically assigned to the armed conflict. (Cárdenas and Rodríguez B. 2004) There are exceptions, such as the blowing up of the oil pipelines. The pipelines pass through numerous economically remote areas designated as nature preserves. The parks and preserves are home to priceless terrain anomolies, flora and fauna. Many such locations have suffered attacks, especially by the ELN. Colombians also tie the armed conflict to the environmental damage caused by coca cultivation and cocaine processing. (Arredondo and Díaz 2004, Márquez 2004) It is relatively easy to place geographically and represents an ugly degradation of habitat. (Figure 32) Most of the coca-related destruction is directly attributable to the FARC and its industrial partners.

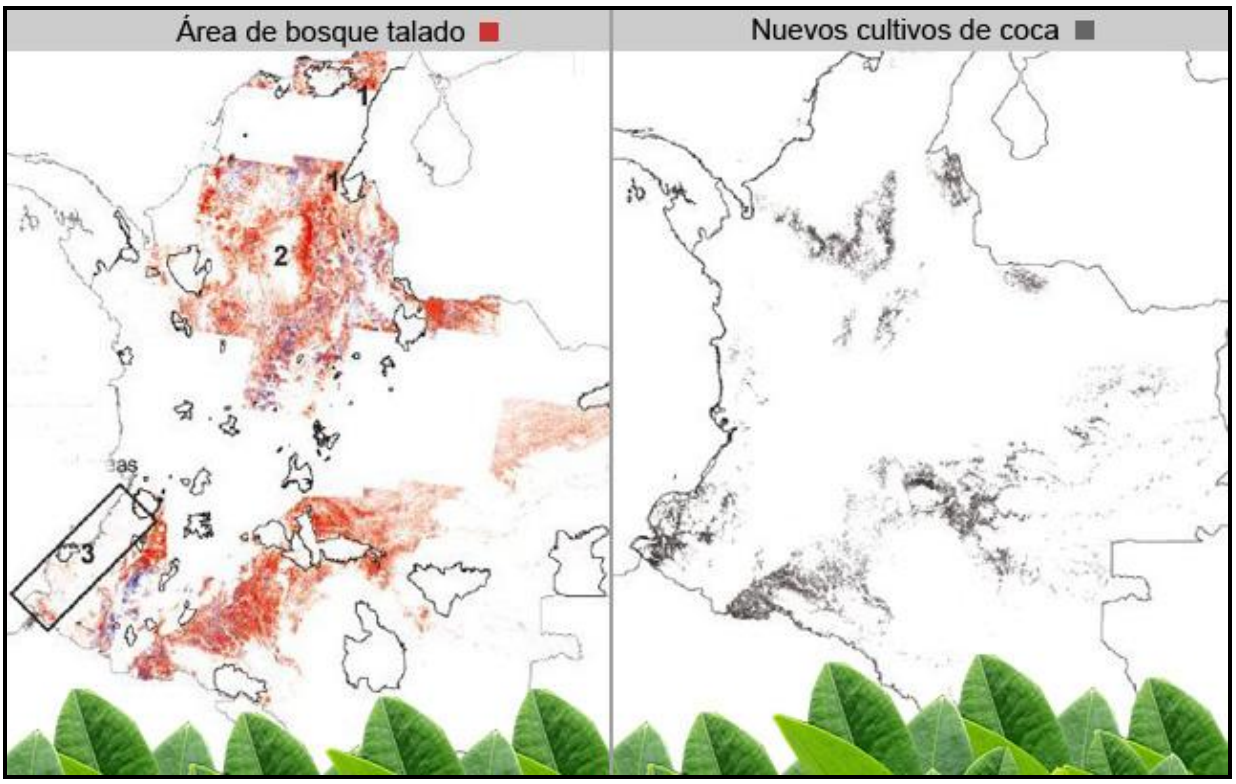


Figure 32: Cocaine agriculture and forest loss. (*Semana* February, 2011) The red on the left side represents deforested area while the black on the right hand represents new coca cultivation.

Figure 33 shows a spatial distribution of unilateral attacks by either the paramilitaries or the guerrillas during a four-year period. The killing subsided somewhat in a few of the regions shown, such as around Medellín and in the Montes de María area to the north. Figure 34 shows war-related deaths as compared to homicides, most of which are not connected to the organized political conflict. Separating regular, domestic or 'everyday' murder from organized violence is methodologically challenging at best. However, the two maps apparently indicate what we would expect -- that the organized violence had a different spatial distribution than the regular violence. The regular violence was evenly distributed, appearing to follow demographics, while the organized violence appears clustered in relation to the physical geography. The clusters of organized violence correspond to the Santa Marta, Catatumbo, Arauca, Magdalena Medio, Nevado del Huila, Putumayo, and Macarena/Caguán/Guaviare regions as I describe them later.

Figure 35 is a United Nations finding regarding the spatial distribution of forced internal population displacement during a two-year period of the war. The areas highlighted in red as being the most troubled include Arauca, Putumayo, southern Tolima (Nevado del Huila), Paramillo, southern Bolivar (Medio Magdalena), Santa Marta, and Catatumbo – the same areas highlighted on other cost maps. Figure 36 displays one of the sequences of maps in a Colombian government atlas titled *Characterization of Rural Lands and its Correlation with Forced Displacement in Colombia*. (My translation) (Presidencia, República de Colombia 2010) That atlas emphasizes the correlation that displacement has with coca cultivation. The atlas does not include a distribution of violence map or attempt to show a correlation between the displacements and violence. Figure 37 illuminates a related phenomenon, the loss of property by those displaced. The map suggests that a great deal of rural property suffered illegal transfers in the process of population displacement. It appears that the geographers and others involved in

the construction of these spatial distribution maps presumed coca cultivation to have been the indirect engine of the forced displacements. Methodologically, the atlas makers used coca cultivation as the logical, visible proxy for places of displacement perpetrations. That is to say, armed actors induced the displacements under study. The receiving or net in-migration counties are often not far from the out-migration counties. Logically, such migrants were escaping immediate harm, rather than deliberatively seeking a more economically viable environment. That the displaced families suffer material hardship as a direct result of the displacement requires no statistical support. The beginning places of the forced migrations are places of perpetrations. Whether we can classify those places as places of impunity depends on the success of any pursuits after the perpetrators. Armed pursuits themselves increase the immediate levels of violence, which in turn raises migratory pressures.

More troubling even than displacements are the massacres. Figure 38 is noteworthy not only for the multiplicity of massacre events that it reflects, but also for their spatial distribution. Note the spatial coincidence among almost all the 'where is the war?' maps, including the massacres map in Figure 38 and the human righs violeations map of Figure 53.

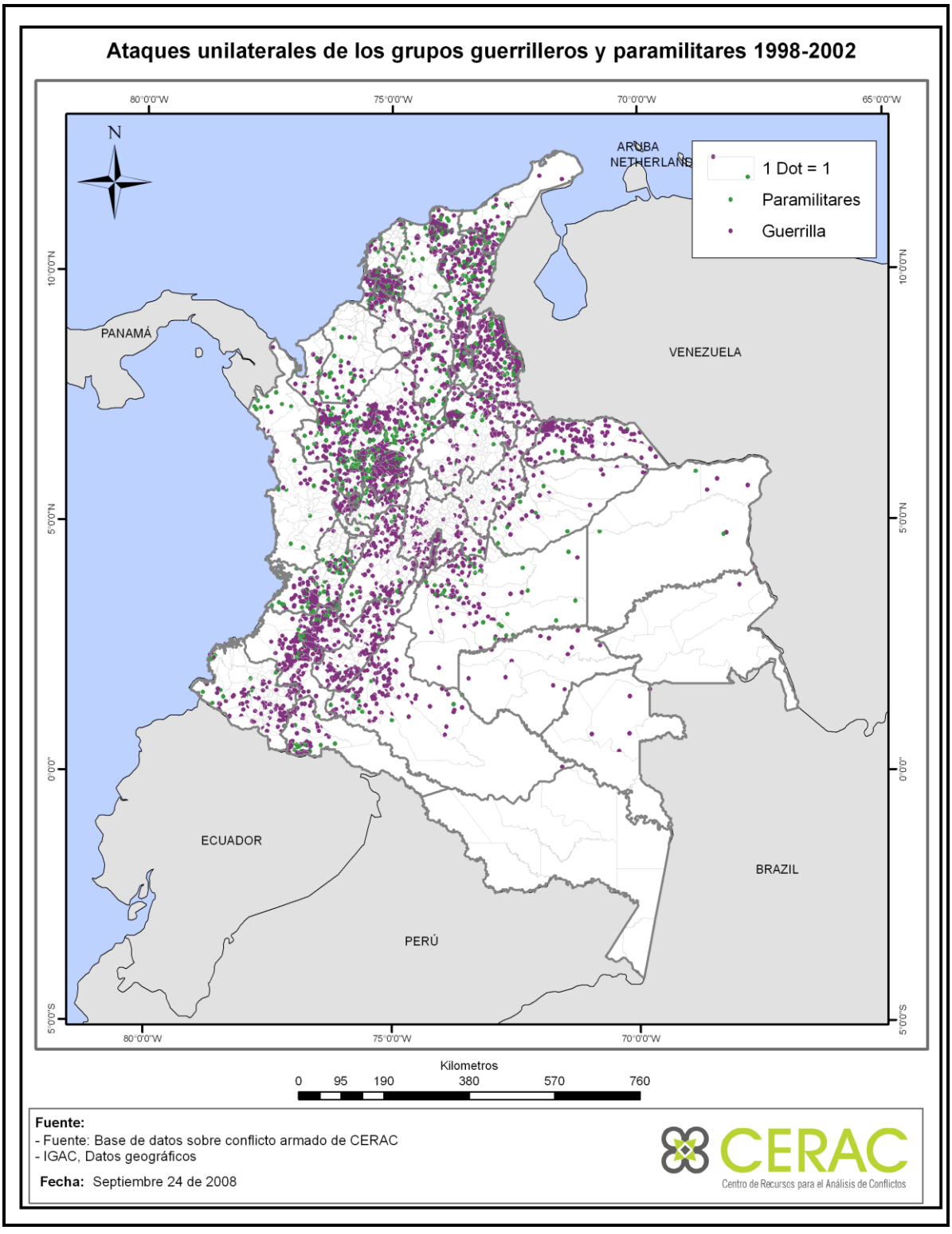


Figure 33: Guerrilla and paramilitary unilateral attacks 1998-2002. (CERAC 2013).

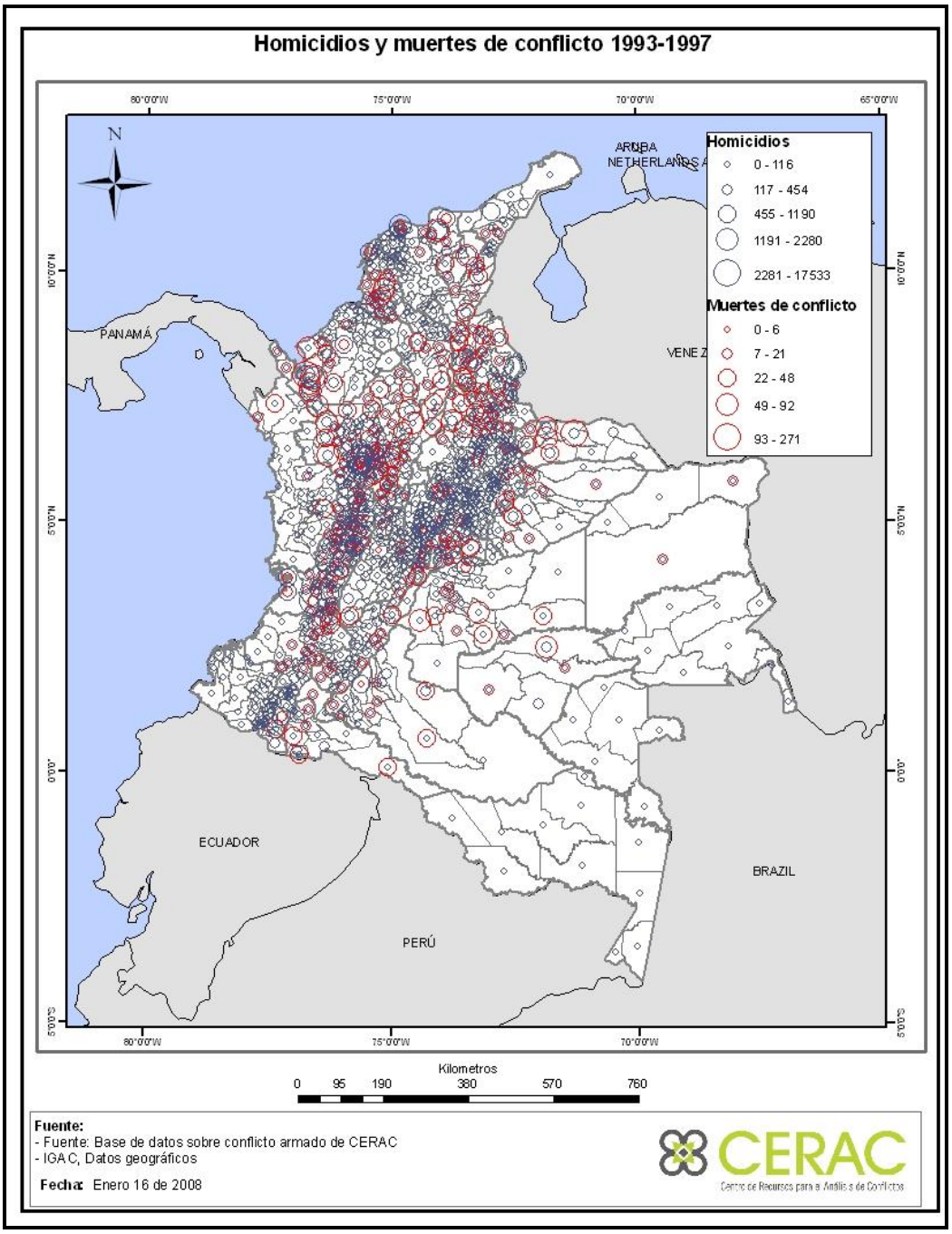


Figure 34: Homicides and deaths caused by the conflict. (CERAC 2013).

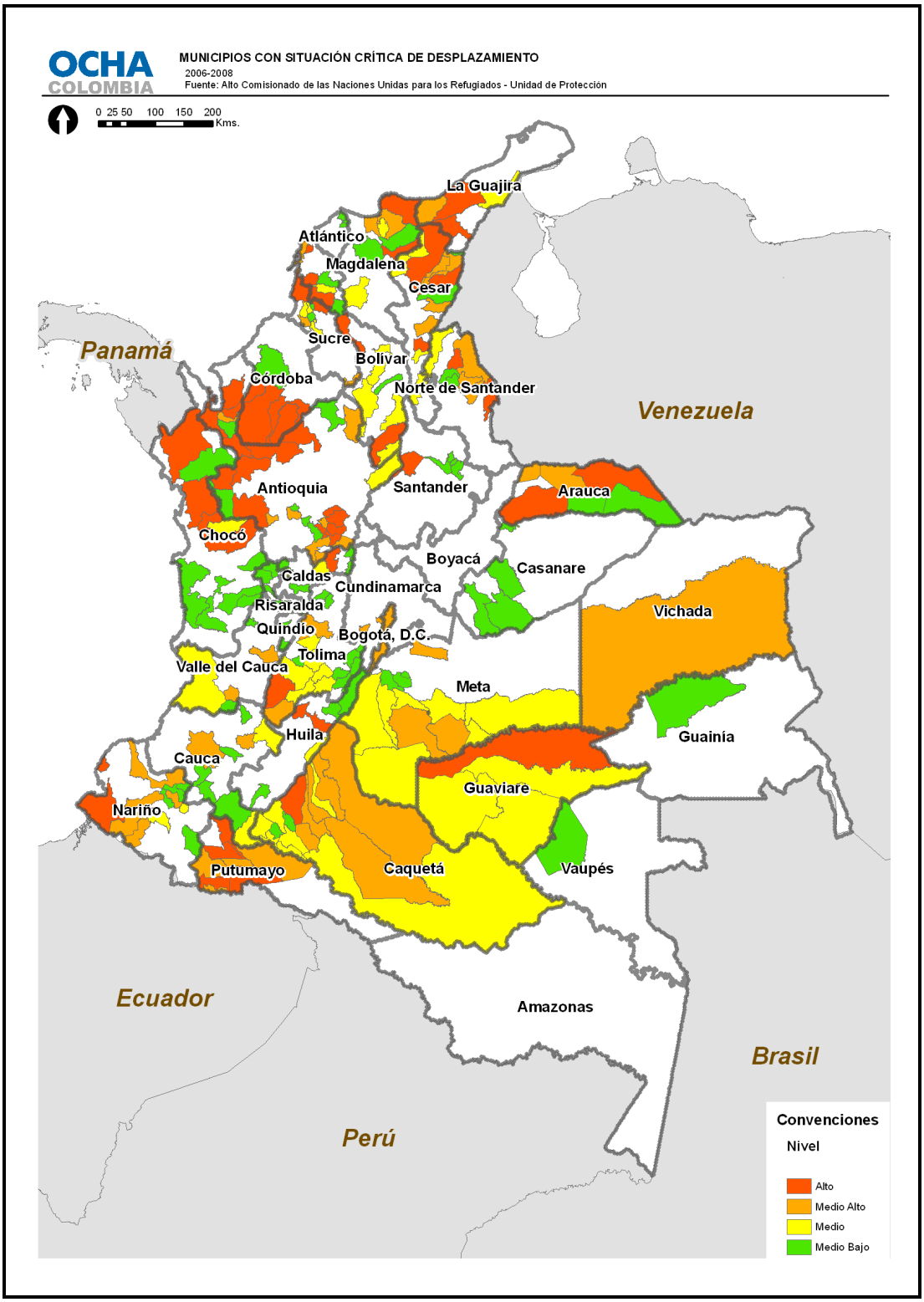


Figure 35: Counties showing 'critical' levels of forced displacement (2006-2008). (United Nations High Commission for Refugees, 2008) Red is worst. Population displacement is also difficult to understand spatially. There is no doubt that in the past few decades, paramilitaries, guerrillas and violent gangs of all sorts forcibly and illegally

evicted thousands of Colombians from their preferred homes. Depth of the victims' place identity, distance and frequency of displacement, number of returns and the conditions of the return -- these and many other sub-questions embroil Colombians in what for today has become a centerpiece issue to be solved.

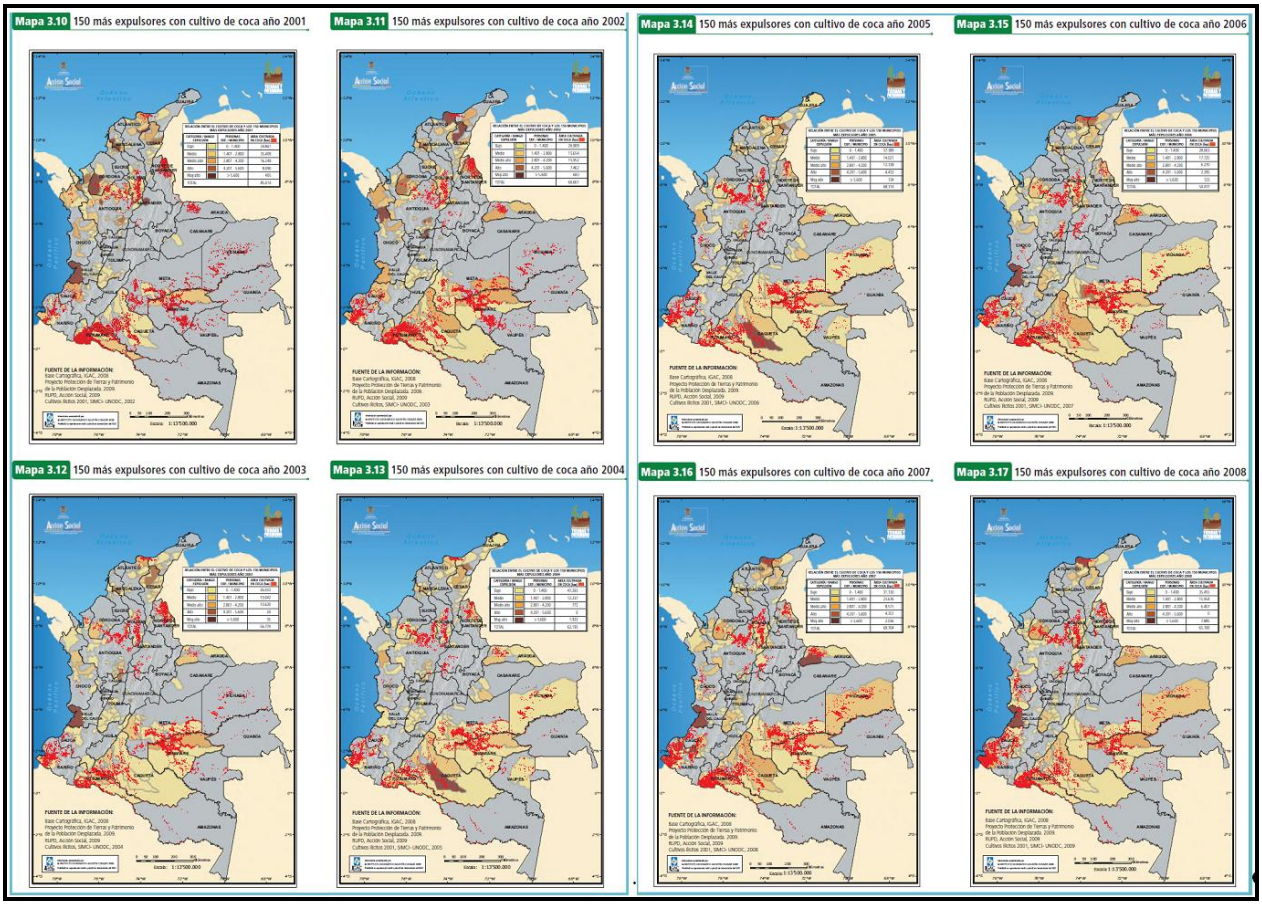


Figure 36: The 150 counties with the most out-migration of displaced persons versus cocaine coca cultivation. (Presidencia, Repúbica de Colombia 2010).

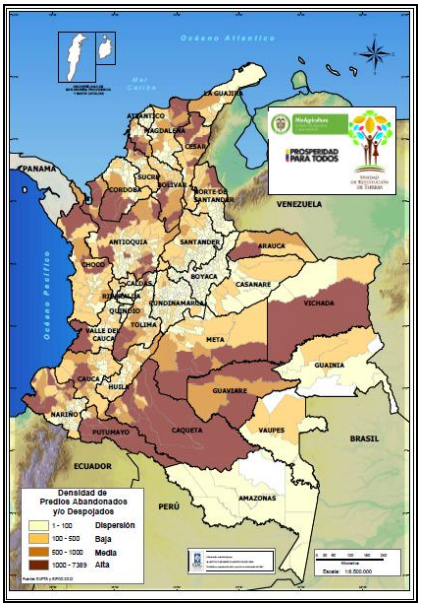


Figure 37: Areas with highest loss of property or dispossessions. (Unidad de Restitución de Tierras 2013).

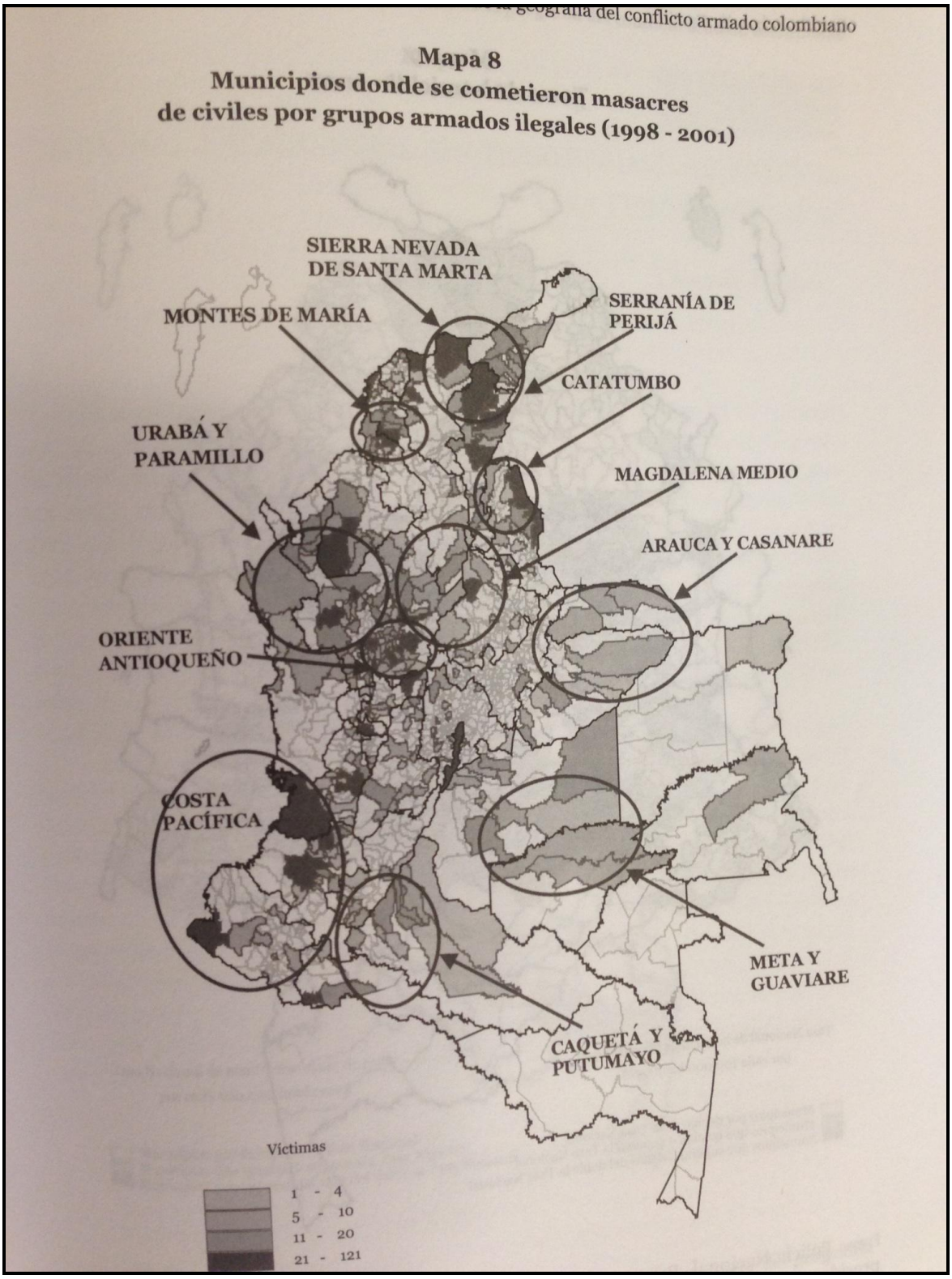


Figure 38: Concentrations of massacres in Colombia. (Montañez, et al. 2002 p. 179) The title translates to, 'Counties where massacres have been committed against civilians by illegal armed groups (1998-2001)'. The shading is of number of victims, darker is more.

Of the items that depict the location of the war according to its costs, I believe landmine phenomena are the most revealing. The locations are relatively specific and tied to a high degree of malevolent intent. Figures 39, 40 and 41 show a counrty-wide distribution of landmines. The guerrillas use landmines and other explosive artifacts for a variety of purposes including terror, but they use the great majority of landmines in tactical combat situations. For the past three decades, the FARC and the ELN planted almost all the landmines in Colombia. In most instances, guerrillas initiate planned ambushes with the devices or leave them behind during escapes. The guerrillas and paramilitaries have sometimes used the landmines as terror weapons against civilians, but they plant the vast majority in mountain terrain in corridors to their sanctuaries. In several of the regional discussions later in the dissertation, I include departmental scale maps that clearly indicate the mountain terrain use of the landmines. The landmines are more effective when routes are constricted, multiplying the effect of the terrain itself. Principal among those effects is an increase in the perceived risk faced by the pursuers. When a pursuer does detonate a landmine, his medical evacuation demands the apportionment of significant resources, including and especially air transport.

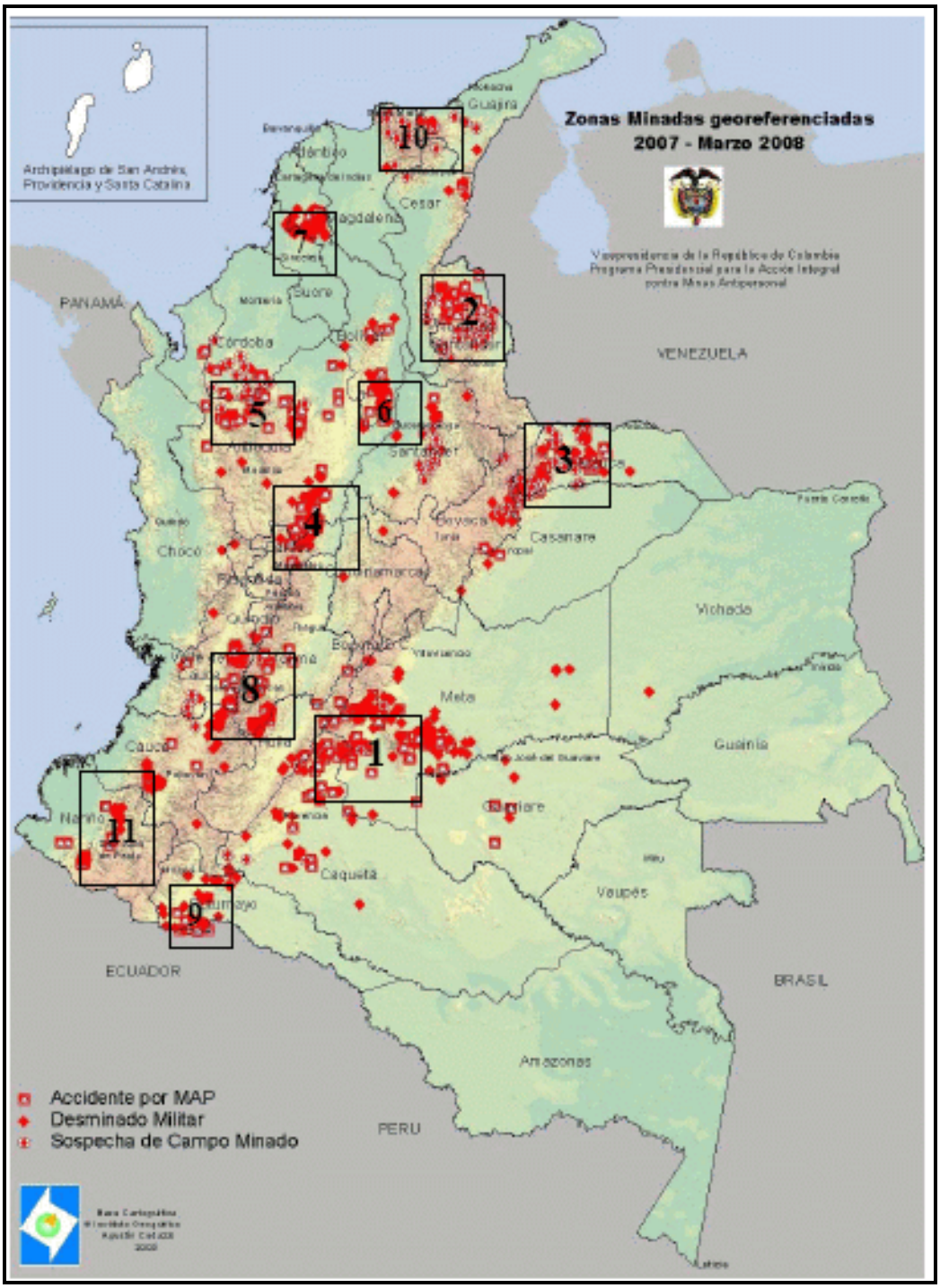
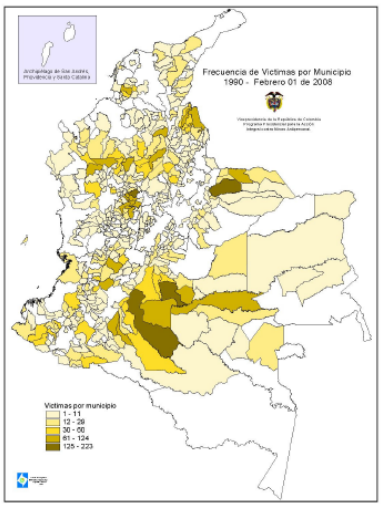


Figure 39: Landmine distribution. The title translates to Georeferenced Mined Zones. This is a government map produced by the National Council on Political and Social Economy. The legend indicates mine accidents, demined areas and suspected minefields. (*Consejo Nacional de Política Económica Y Social, CONEPS* 2009).

Departamento	Municipio	Civil	Militar	Total general
ARAUCA	TAME	48	175	223
META	VISTAHERMOSA	94	117	211
CAQUETA	SAN VICENTE DEL CAGUÁN	7	150	157
ANTIOQUIA	SAN CARLOS	54	87	141
CAQUETA	MONTAÑITA	24	100	124
BOLIVAR	EL CARMEN DE BOLÍVAR	24	89	113
ANTIOQUIA	SAN FRANCISCO	50	56	106
NORTE DE SANTANDER	TEORAMA	13	91	104
TOLIMA	PLANADAS	7	88	95
CALDAS	SAMANÁ	19	73	92
ANTIOQUIA	ITUANGO	23	68	91
NORTE DE SANTANDER	TIBÚ	33	56	89
GUAVIARE	SAN JOSÉ DEL GUAVIARE	40	44	84
BOLIVAR	SAN PABLO	15	62	77
ANTIOQUIA	SAN LUIS	18	57	75
ANTIOQUIA	ANORÍ	26	48	74
BOLIVAR	MORALES	13	61	74
ANTIOQUIA	ARGELIA	36	36	72
ANTIOQUIA	COCORNÁ	42	30	72
META	LA MACARENA	19	51	70
ANTIOQUIA	SONSÓN	16	53	69
ARAUCA	ARAUQUITA	24	45	69
META	PUERTO RICO	23	42	65
CAQUETA	FLORENCIA	19	46	65
ANTIOQUIA	DABEIBA	21	43	64
TOLIMA	CHAPARRAL	8	56	64
ANTIOQUIA	GRANADA	29	33	62
CAUCA	EL TAMBO	19	41	60
NORTE DE SANTANDER	HACARÍ	5	54	59
SANTANDER	BARRANCABERMEJA	8	51	59
NORTE DE SANTANDER	EL TARRA	13	43	56
ANTIOQUIA	TARAZÁ	42	7	49
META	URIBE	3	46	49
TOLIMA	ORTEGA		48	48
NARIÑO	SAMANIEGO	45	3	48



El 41% del total de municipios es decir 460, han presentado accidentes que registran víctimas por map y por muse.

Figure 40: Landmine distribution by county 1990-2008. (Vicepresidencia 2013) The map caption states, "41% of counties, that is to say, 460, have presented victim-causing accidents from antipersonnel mnes (MAP) and unexploded ordinance (MUSE)." The darker areas are worse. The period is 1990-2008.

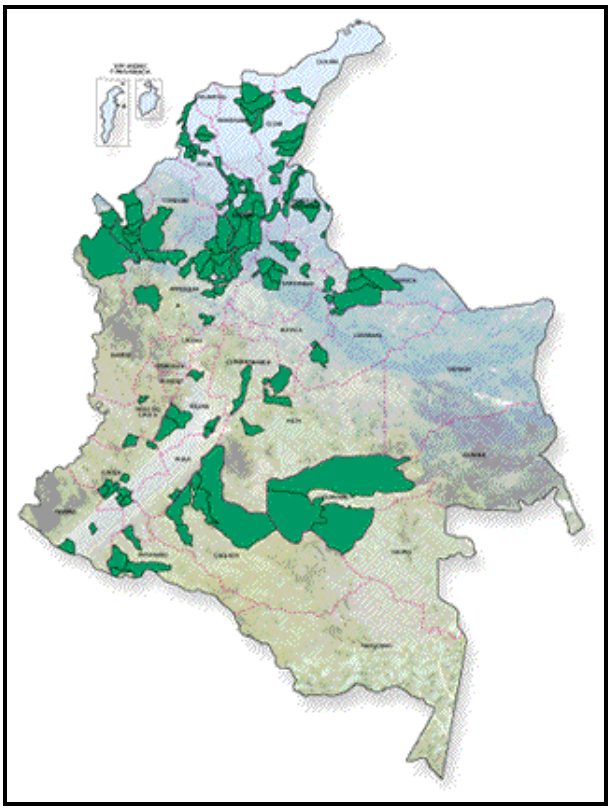


Figure 41: Landmine distribution by counties circa 2002. (Observatory on Human Rights in Colombia undated).

The renderings in Figure 42, all titled, "Síntesis de violaciones Acciones Bélicas (AB), Violaciones al DIH y Violencia Político Social (Synthesis of violations Combat Actions (AB), Violations of International Humanitarian Law (DIH) and Political-Social Violence)" are of the Colombian researchers' use of data from the non-governmental organization CINEP to show human rights violations for 1995, 1997 and 2000. Notably, while the overall spatial pattern of violations does not appear in the renderings to have changed greatly over the five-year period, the area of the *Despeje* (zone conceded to the FARC during peace negotiations (1998-2002) is one of intense violations in 1997 and of no violations (or null data) in 2000. Considering the timing of the study, the researchers may have been argumentational in their representation of data, preferring to suggest human rights improvement in the area of the FARC controlled *Despeje*. Alternatively, they may have had insufficient data and decided to interpolate. A similar sequence in Figure 43 also shows that the war has not been waged in any one place over time, but that it has been waged in some places regularly. Note that in Figure 42 as in Figure 43, the depiction corresponding to the year 2000 shows an absence of conflict in the Macarena/Caguán/Guaviare area. (The sequence is a small sampling of the Echandía study, which has almost 250 pages of maps and other graphics.) The sequence in Figure 44 was prepared at about the same time as that in figures 42 and 43, using data prepared by a different research NGO. The images deceive visually in that, in 42 and 43, the data was not adjusted for area or population, whereas in 44 it was adjusted for population. Nevertheless, the sequence in Figure 44 suggests that, in terms of the intensity of violence, the war got worse (in terms of the overall intensity and extent of geographic involvement) and then better over the period tracked. Some parts of the country seem to be perpetually suffering. Figure 45 derives from the same dataset as the sequence in Figure 44. The twelve regions highlighted in Figure 45 concord

generally with the zones indicated in many other studies as being where the war is located within Colombia. Notably, the Figure 45 graphic highlights areas of heroin poppy cultivation (using purple triangles). Heroin poppy had been a daunting counternarcotics challenge in Colombia along with cocaine coca, but during the first decade of this century, the cultivation of heroin poppy all but disappeared. Colombia narcotics police attribute the decline to various factors, including land tenancy (smaller holdings at appropriate growing altitudes) and more effective law enforcement in those areas. One undeniable factor is a precipitous drop in the world market price because of an explosion of growth in other parts of the world, especially southern Asia. (United States Government 2005).

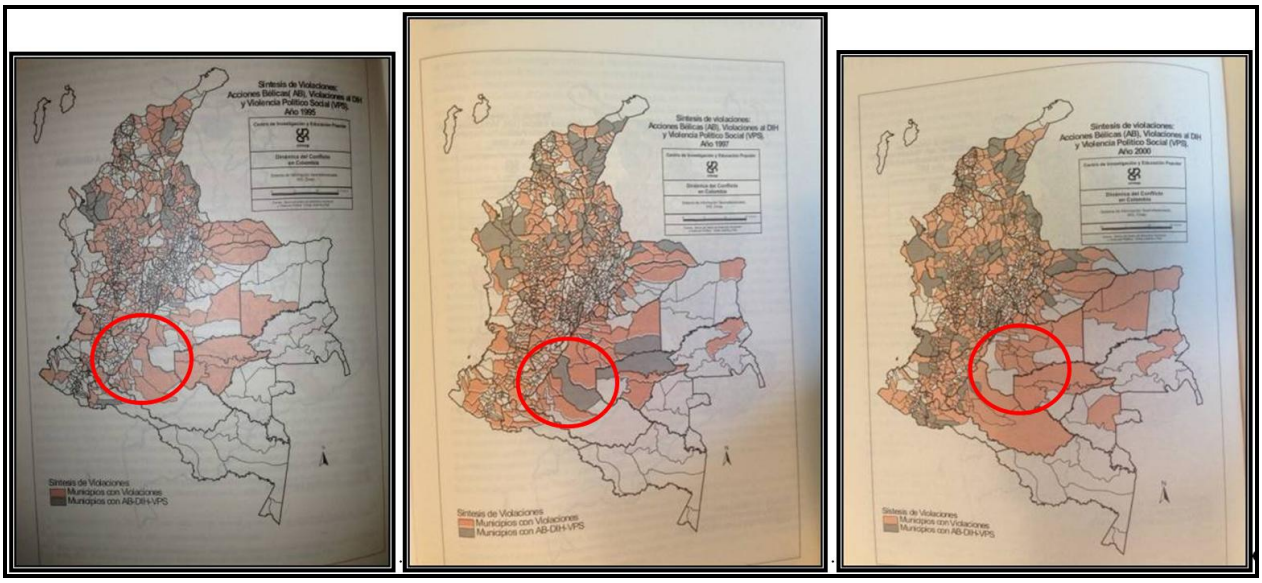


Figure 42: Series titled, "Síntesis de violaciones Acciones Bélicas (AB), Violaciones al DIH y Violencia Político Social (Synthesis of violations Combat Actions (AB)" (Violations of International Humanitarian Law (DIH) and Political-Social Violence) from a 2002 study. (González, et al. 2002; pp. 126, 109, 110) The researchers use data from the non-governmental organization CINEP to show human rights violations for 1995, 1997 and 2000.

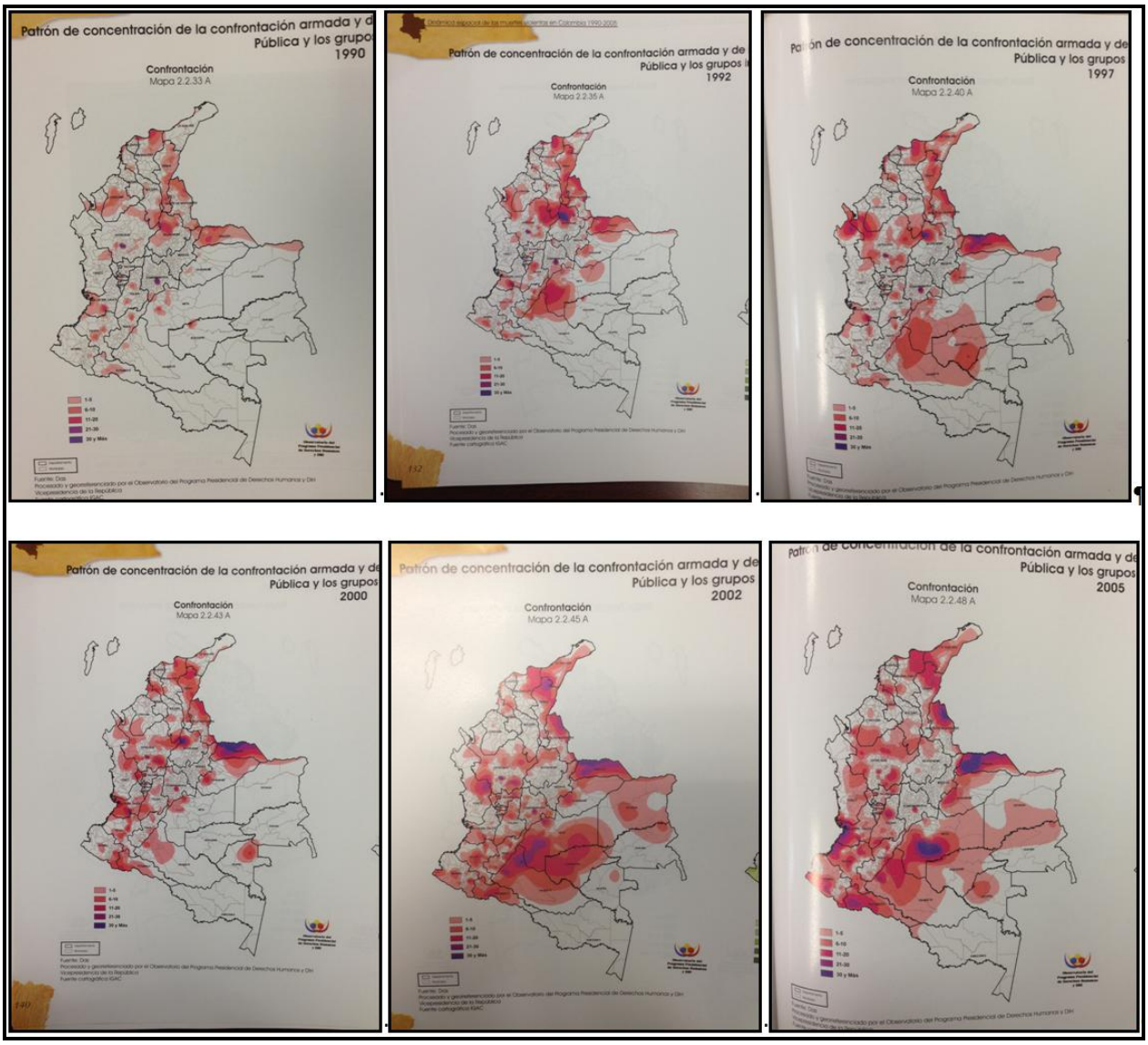


Figure 43: Sequence on spatial dynamics of the conflict. (Echandía 2008 pp. 130-145).

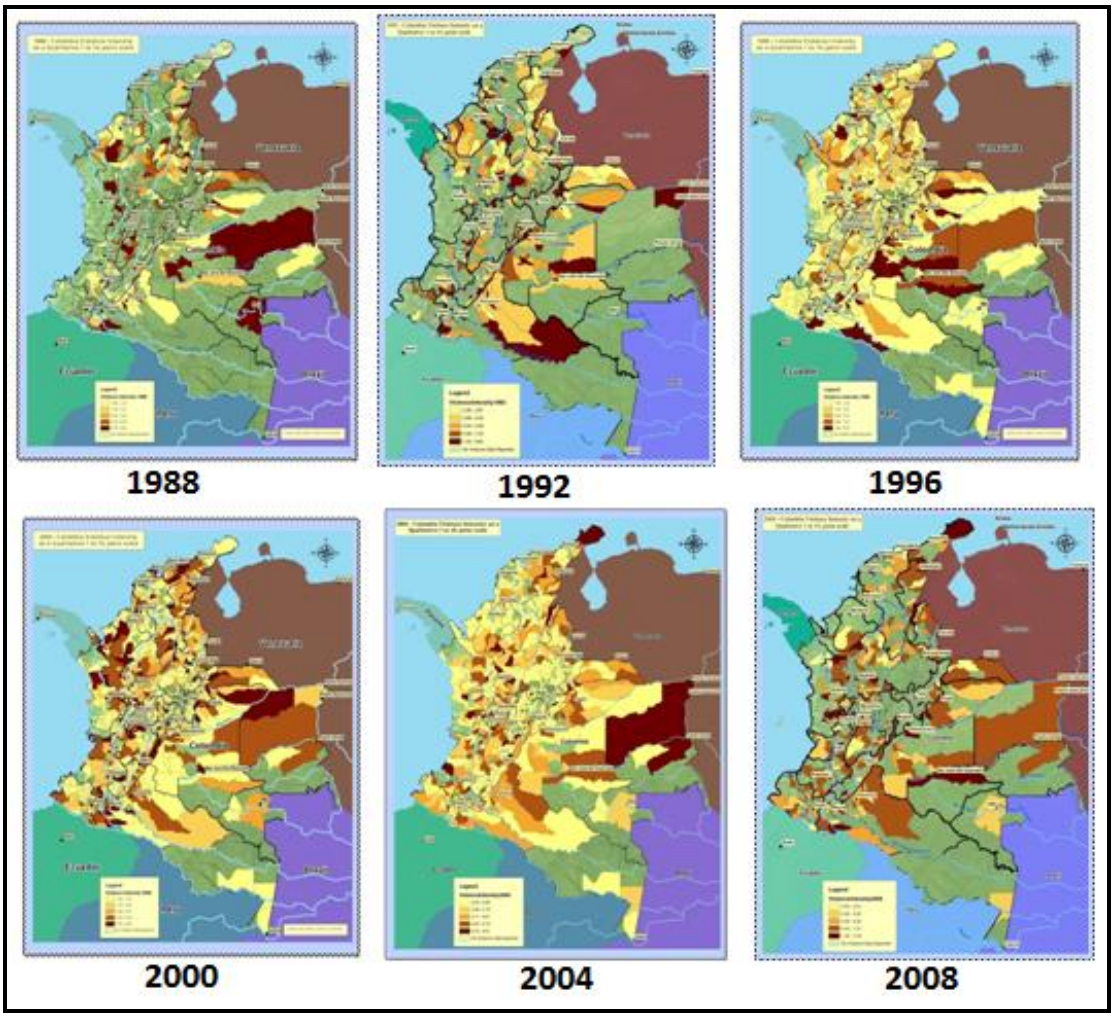


Figure 44: Sequence showing counties by 'intensity' of violence over time. (FMSO 2008) The darker the earth tone, the more intense the violence as measured by number of incidents in that year in that county. My interpretation of the sequence is that it reflects a spatial dilution of the war into more and more counties. From the mid 1980s to 2000, the increase was due to the rapid growth of guerrilla capability and initiative. After 2002, the increased intensity was due more to the Colombian military gaining capacity and greatly increasing the tempo of its armed pursuits. Decrease in the dilution of intensity by 2008 reflects military successes by the government against the guerrilla groups.

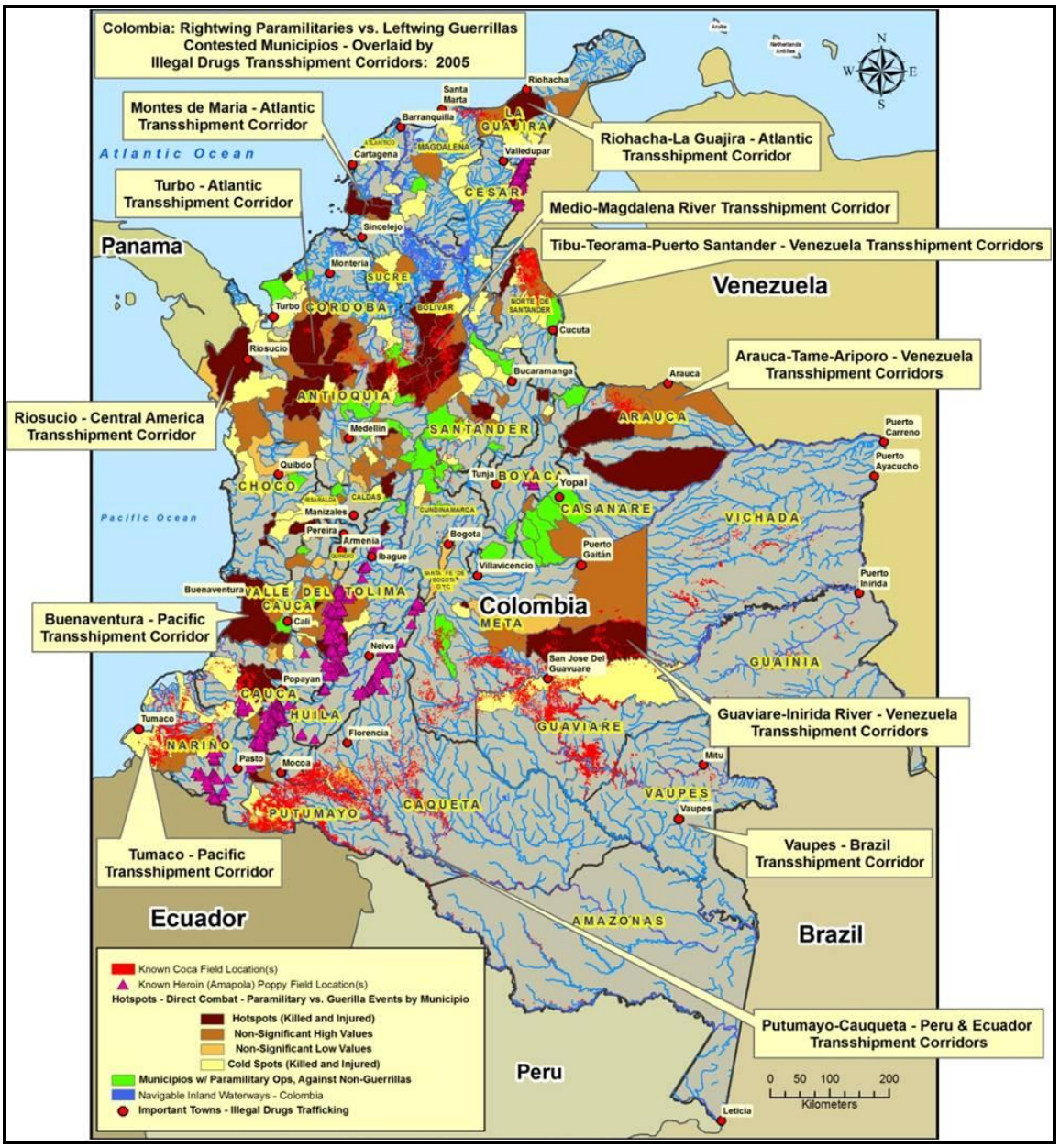


Figure 45: A depiction of twelve areas where confrontations pitting anti-communist paramilitaries against communist guerrillas were especially frequent and violent. (Reanier 2007).

I did not focus research on the spatial distribution of economic performance within Colombia. Numerous Colombian maps show spatial differentials in material well-being by county. (See generally SIGOT IGAC) Especially in those rural counties most relevant to this study, the internal population displacement has been considerable, both due to pressures from

violence and to peaceful motivations. That movement somewhat confounds the longitudinal value of some economic data. In addition, many locales in Colombia, rich and poor, have experienced almost no organized violence, inviting the speculation that other factors are more significant than is economic performance as measured place-to-place. Finally, guerrilla sanctuaries within Colombia appear in areas where economic data is often absent or incomplete. With all of the methodological weaknesses, and although (as I argue elsewhere) poverty does not seem from spatial evidence to cause the violence, it does seem logical that the close proximity of armed groups would be a detriment to a local population's economic well-being. Much of the longitudinal violence data indicates that counties from which Colombians derive the most wealth, or where people with wealth live, are subject to violent predatory activity.

According to strategies

Figures 46 through 53 relate Colombian depictions of the spatial distribution of the war to inform or explain a strategy of one kind or another. In 2002, the incoming president, Álvaro Uribe, designated the first two of what that administration termed Rehabilitation and Consolidation zones. (*El Tiempo*, September 2002) (Figure 46) These followed closely what the previous government, of Andrés Pastrana, had tried to designate as 'Military Operational Theatres' wherein special exceptions to civil liberties would be allowed. The Colombian constitutional court struck down the Pastrana rules for those areas, requiring a legislative review and remodeling. This is a centrally important point in that the designated areas were not just priorities for increased military operations or government investment in social infrastructure (although this was the case). The zones were also the subject of a land-use plan the backbone of which included a suspension of certain civil liberties and specific powers given to the military

commanders of the zones. The military was given authority to do detailed census and cadastral work, to limit the presence of foreigners, etc. Legally, if not practically, the rules imposed on the residents a new obligation to report changes in tenancy and the presence of armed persons. (Diario del Pueblo, September 2002) The first Rehabilitation and Consolidation zones included nine counties in Bolivar Department and fifteen in Sucre. Although this was initially to be administered as one zone by the military, the counties in Bolivar and Sucre correspond to the 'Montes de Maria' and the 'Sierra de San Lucas' or 'Barrancabermeja' areas as depicted elsewhere. The other of the first two zones was composed of three large counties in Arauca. In Arauca, the Álvaro Uribe government consolidation plan included encouragement of large scale industrial agricultural practices in order to draw agriculture away from coca production.

> "The Montes de Maria area strategic point along the corridor that communicates the Serranía de San Lucas, in southern Bolivar - where there are large areas cultivated with coca and heroin poppy - with the Gulf of Morrosquillo, in the Caribbean Sea, where cargoes of illicit drugs are embarked and contraband weapons brought in...In Arauca, the FARC, the ELN and the AUC are all fighting over the Department, which receives millions in petroleum royalties. Arauquita and Saravena form part of a strategic corridor that permits illegal groups to move between Boyacá, the Santanders (departments) and Arauca, and then take sanctuary in their rear guard in Venezuela." (*El Tiempo* 2002)

It appears after a decade that the government efforts in the Montes de Maria area have been more effective in reducing violence and in reducing the influence of the guerrillas than has the effort in Arauca. Such a result is not inconsistent with the findings of this research, given that Arauca is

far more remote than Montes de Maria in terms of the potential for a fugitive force to take advantage of and augment favorable competitive risk distances.

The UN Human Rights office in Colombia was immediately interested in the Álvaro Uribe administration's choices for its first two Rehabilitation and Consolidation Zones, especially in light of a restriction of civil liberties in those zones. The UN map highlighted the Limon-Coveñas pipeline and the by-then defunct *Despeje* (cleared zone conceded to the FARC 1998-2002). This may be cartographic evidence that the human rights office, while focused on collusion between the government and the paramilitary AUC, recognized the trail of violations marked by certain infrastructure and territories.

The authors of the Colombian government briefing in which the image in Figure 48 appears introduce their presentation with the question "What is the problem." The image was included at the beginning of the document along with those related in figures 23 and 24 (pages 115,116). The authors attributed the Figure 48 overlay to the Ministry of Defense. The document offers no explanation of the map's symbology. Nevertheless, based on the same general priority zones, the map asserts a challenge of contraband corridors and fugitive movement.

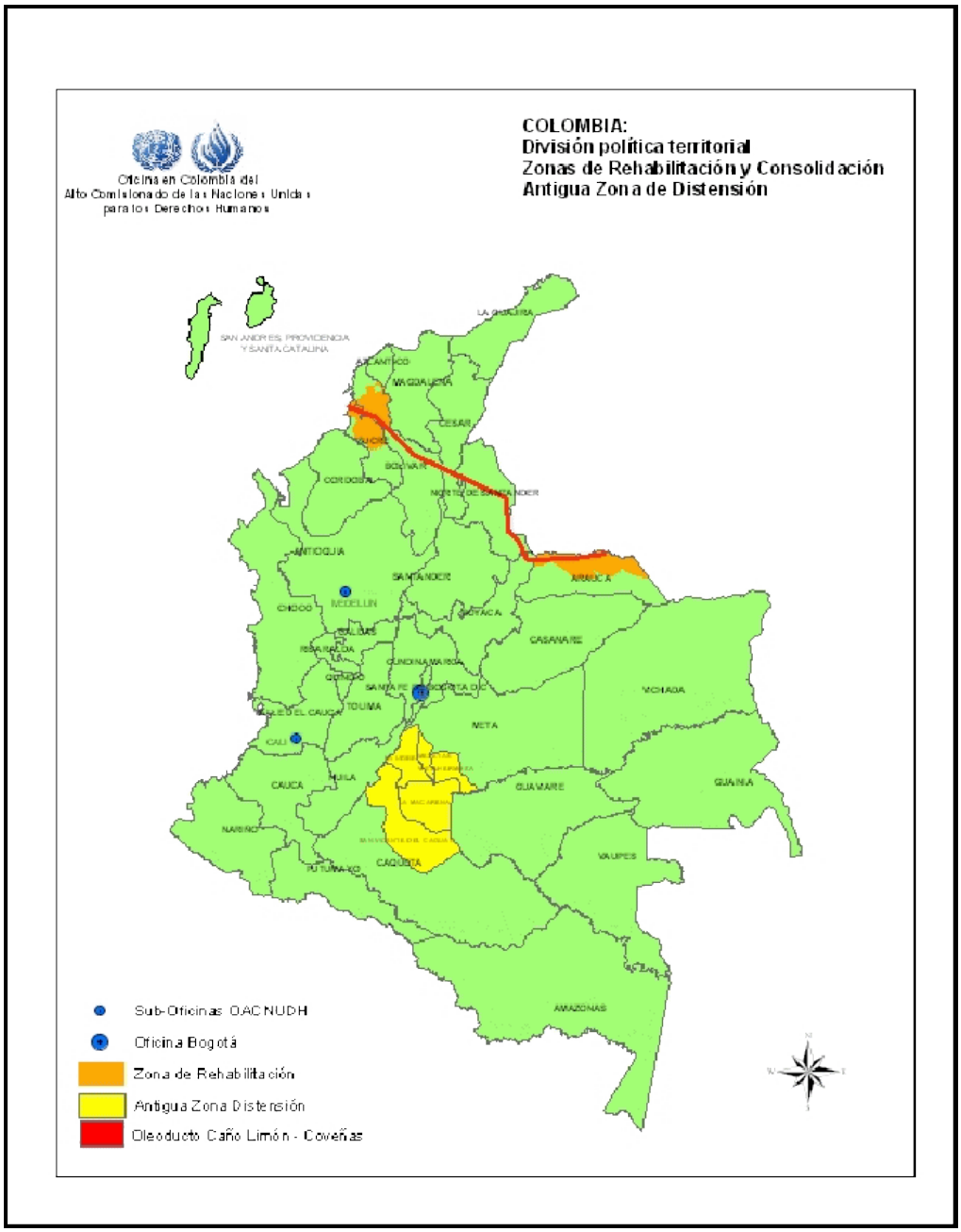


Figure 46: Rehabilitation and Consolidation Zones in 2002. (Office in Colombia of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights 2002). The blue dots indicate locations of UN offices, the yellow area is the former 'Despeje', orange highlights the first two Rehabilitation Zones during the Alvaro Uribe presidency, and th red line represents the Caño-Limon oil pipeline.

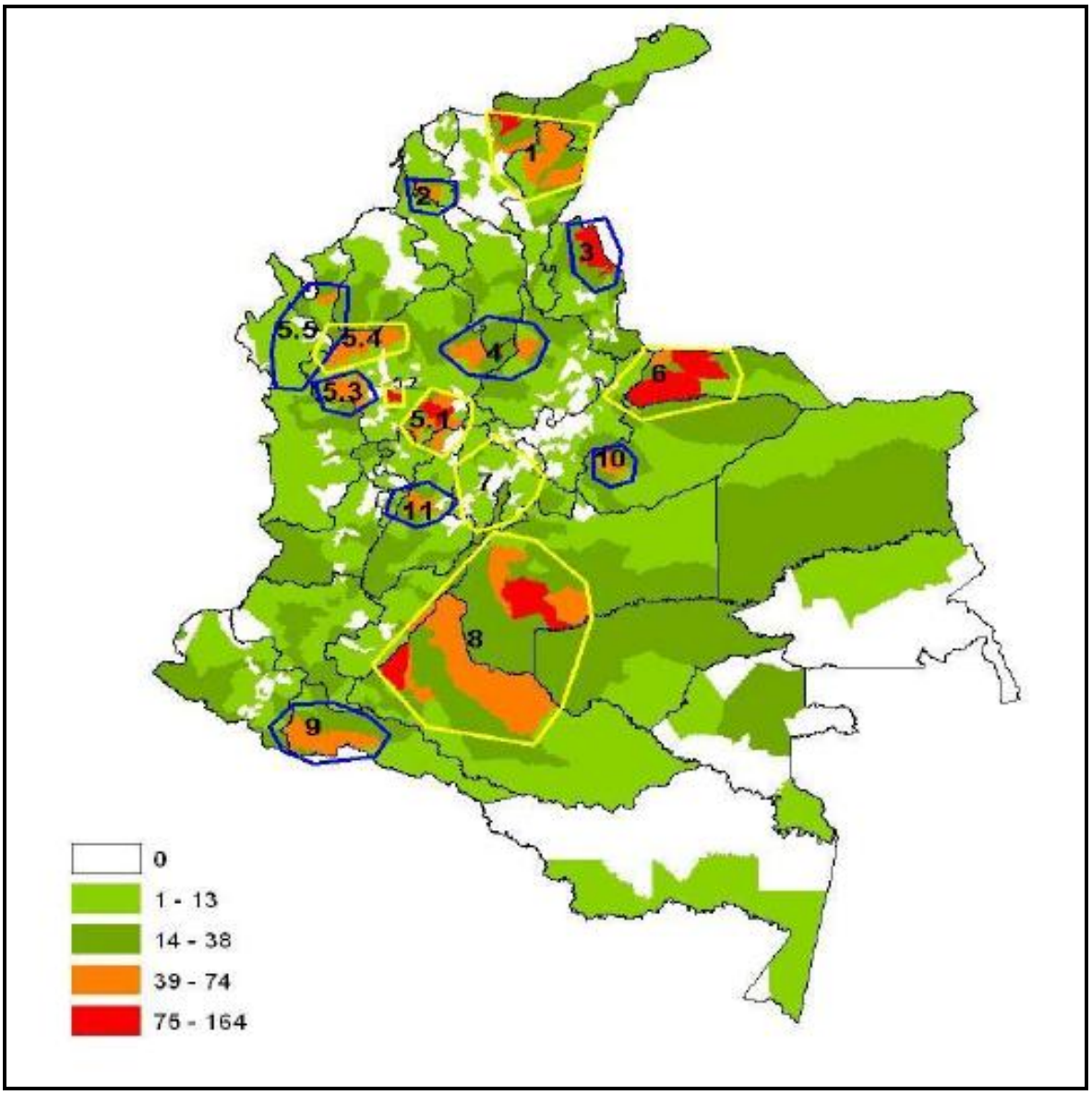


Figure 47: "Principales Teatros de Operaciones 1998-2005" (Principle Theatres of Operation 1998-2005). The map offers a spatial distribution of combat operation priorities, perhaps according to named operations or some unstated level of resource application. Red shows the highest operational tempo. (González 2007, p. 17). González cites "DNP-DJS-GEGAI" which refers to *Departamento de Planeación, Nacional-Dirección de Justicia y Seguridad – Grupo de Gobierno y Asuntos Internos* (National Planning Department, Office of Justice and Security, Governance and Internal Affairs Group). It is not cited to the Defense Ministry.

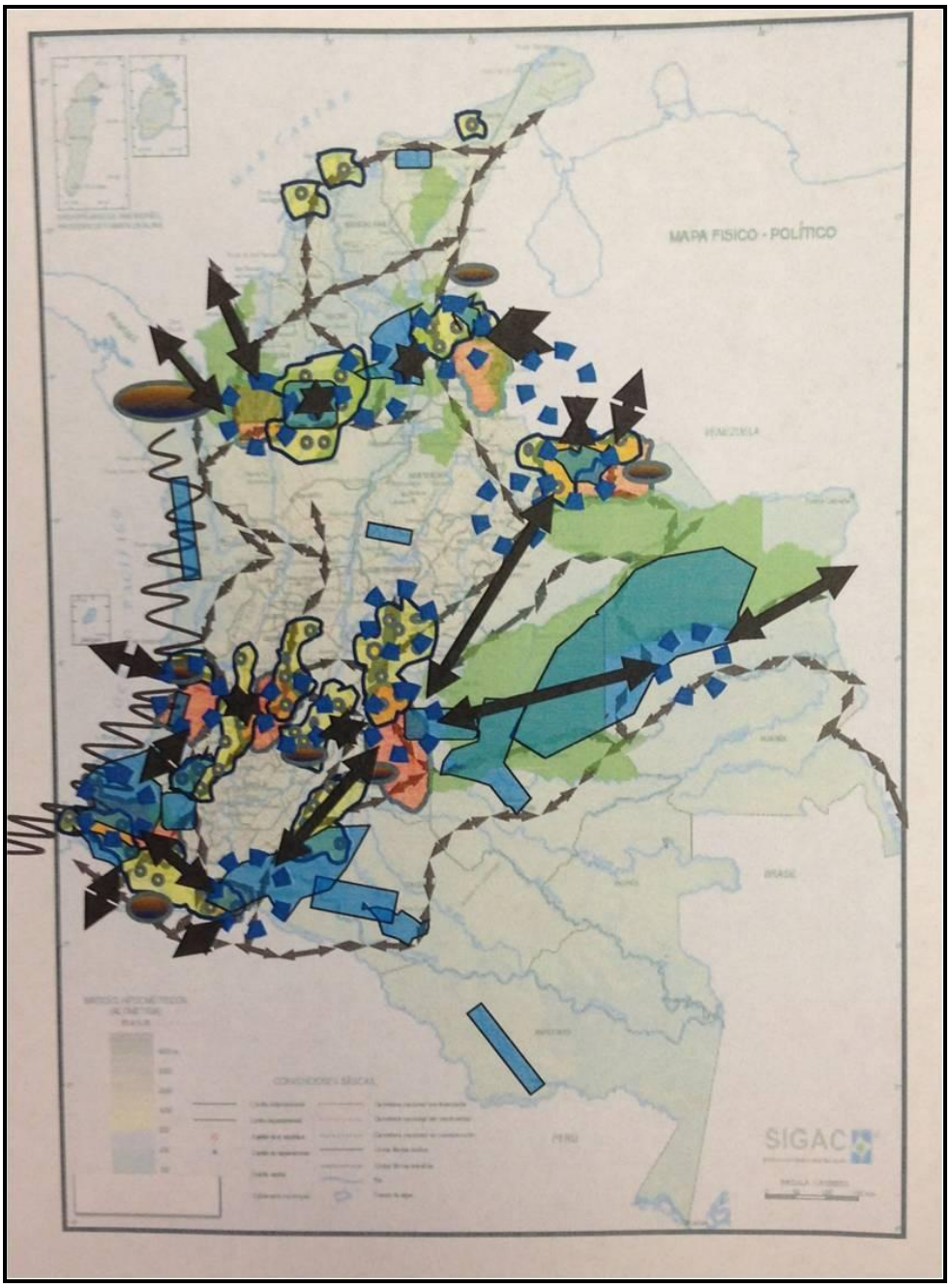


Figure 48: Impressionistic Map of the Problem. (Unidad Administrativa Especial 2012) Red areas are FARC concentrations; orange shows areas of non-cultivation narcotics-related activity; blue areas are narcotics cultivation zones; yellow shows areas with *milicia* presence (*milicia* are non-combatant support groups of the FARC or ELN); and green shows BACRIM areas (BACRIM stands for *Bandas Criminales*, criminal bands which are mostly remnants and reconfigurations of broken guerrilla and paramilitary units). I do not know what the dark ovals stars, etc. represent. Please note in particular the east-west sequence of yellow and red blotches leading through the Nevado del Huila area in the center-south of the map.

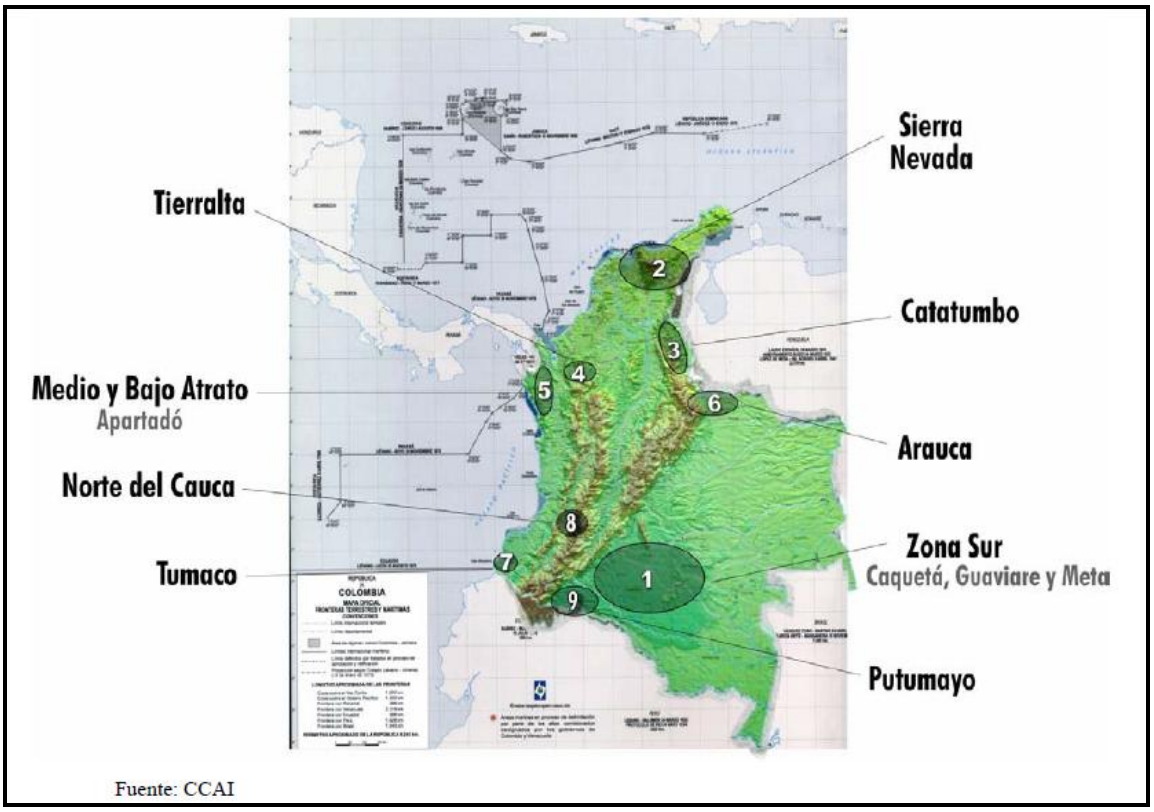


Figure 49: National Consolidation Plan, 2010. (CCAI) 'Zonas Focalizadas' (focus zones). (Centro de Coordinación de Acción Integral, CCAI 2010, p. 9) Gonzalez, addressing the same map, refered to the indicated areas as those in which the principle military operations have developed in recent years. Gonzalez 2007, p. 12) Note the year of the Gonzalez paper in which the map appears.The map in Figure 49 shows the priority areas for the flagship government plan in mid to late 2010. Figure 50 shows the priorities two years later.

The spatial construction in Figure 51, from a Colombian web-based journalism and analysis organization led by Juanita León highlights coca, contraband corridors, and national parks. The following image, Figure 52, from another non-governmental research organization, CINEP, also orients on contraband movement corridors. CINEP produced the simpler image in Figure 53 purporting levels of rights violations by county. The image on the left in Figure 54 is from a 2012 USAID report that presents Colombian government priorities according to the four categories indicated by the map's title and the legend categories, 'GOC Prioritized Municipalities: Ethnic Communities, Land Restitution (Microfocalization), Victims, and Consolidation.' The image on the right in Figure 54, provided to the author, is of a slightly

earlier plan, and shows overall priorities in three categories, red being the highest, then blue then yellow. Numerous factors entered into the prioritization decisions, including those ultimately suggested in the left-hand image. The reasoning for the prioritization seems to have included most of the phenomena mentioned throughout this dissertation thus far, to include forced population displacements, land restitution projects, environmental reparation and protection, pacification, counter-narcotics, protection of indigenous peoples, etc.

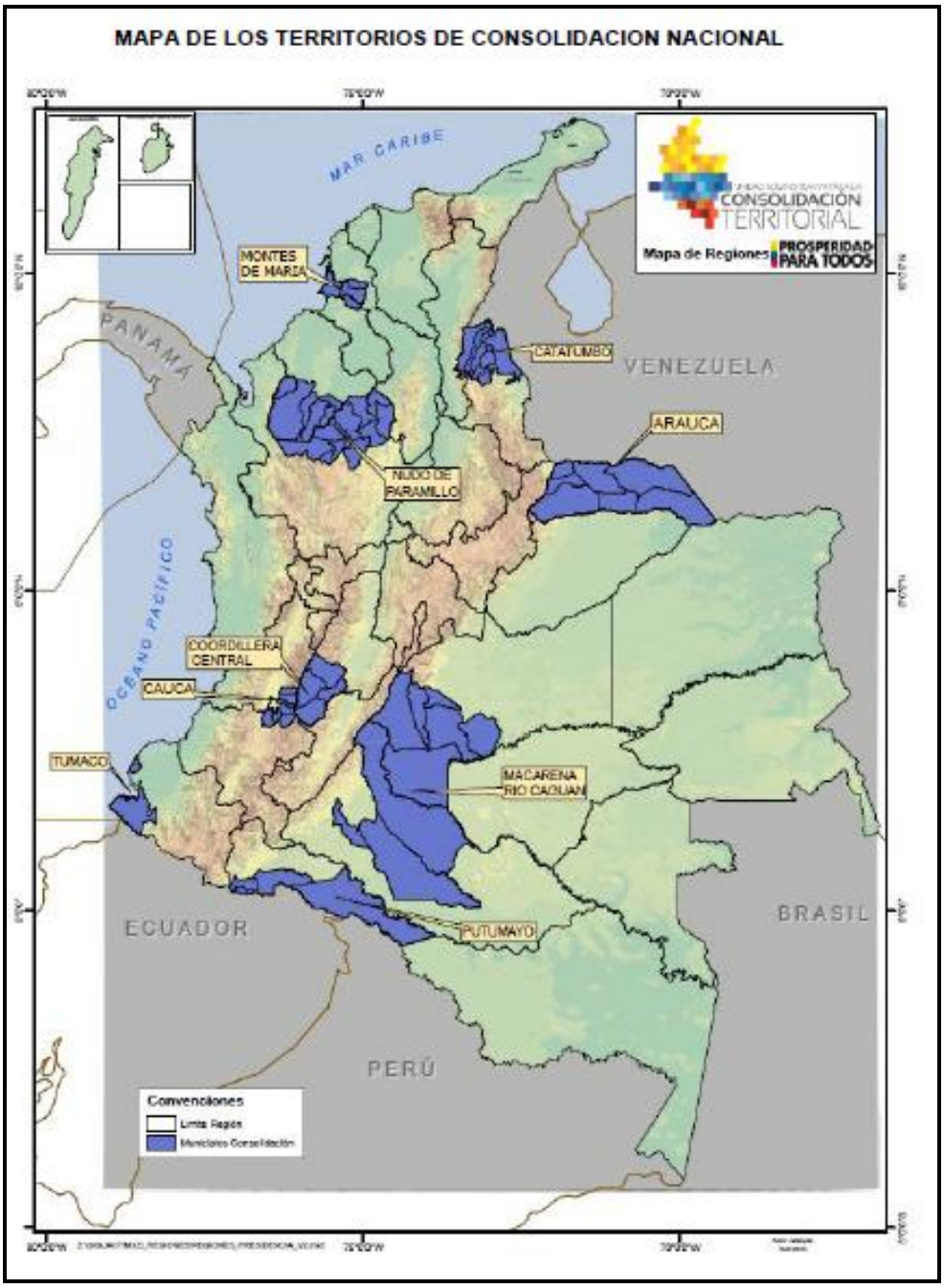


Figure 50: "Map of the National Consolidation Territories," 2012. (Unidad Administrativa Especial para la Consolidación Territorial 2012b) Priority counties are in blue. The Santa Marta and lower Atraco River areas had been dropped and the Montes de Maria area (re)added since the making of the map in Figure 49.

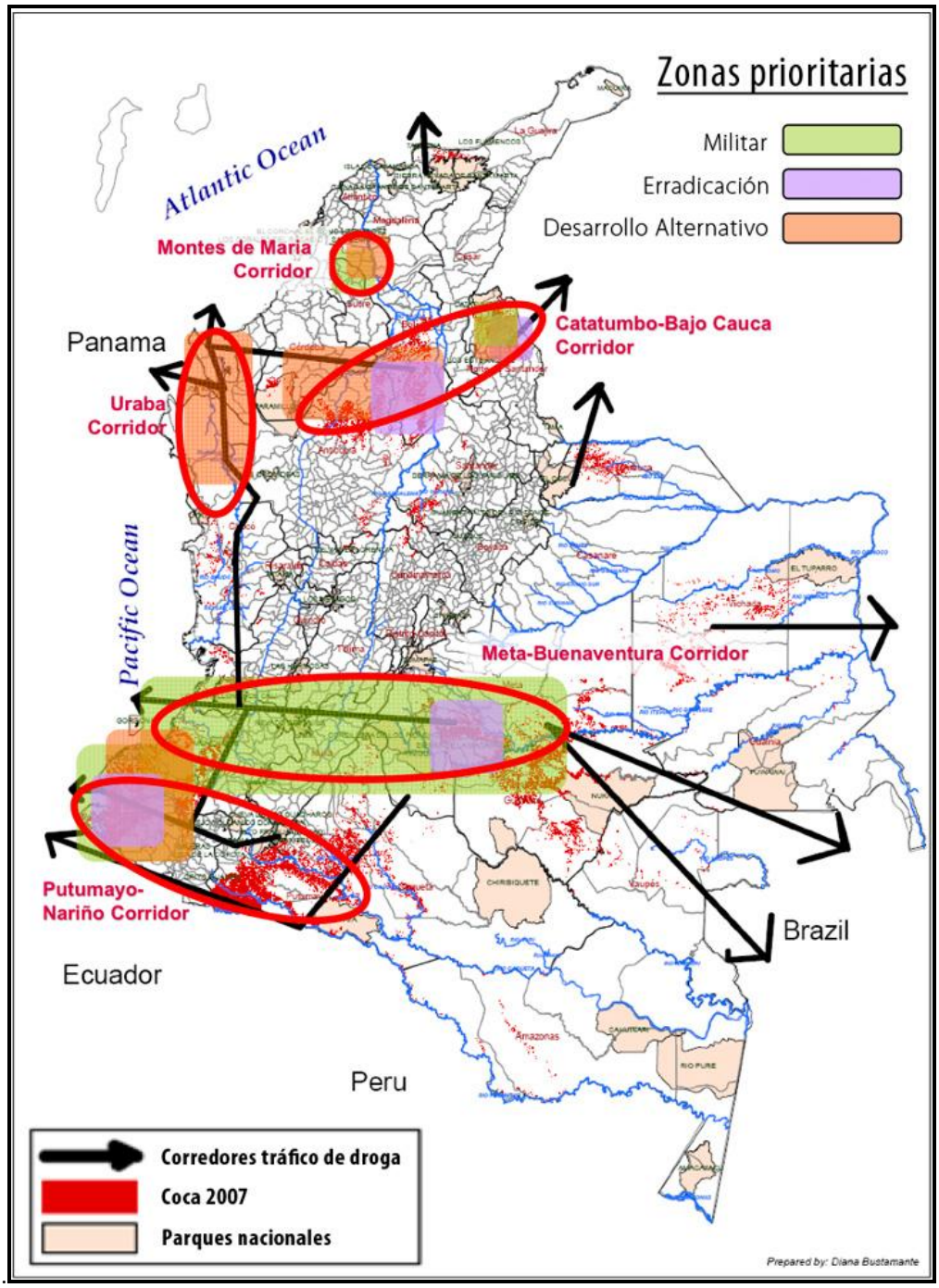


Figure 51: "Priority Zones." A think-tank rendering of the geographic spread of conflict. (Atlas Politico 2010) The green areas are military priority zones, the purple are coca eradication priority zones, and the salmon colored areas are alternative development priority zones. The black arrows are drug traffic corridors, the red dots are coca cultivation as of 2007, and the red ovals are a summary of where the presenters think the war is.

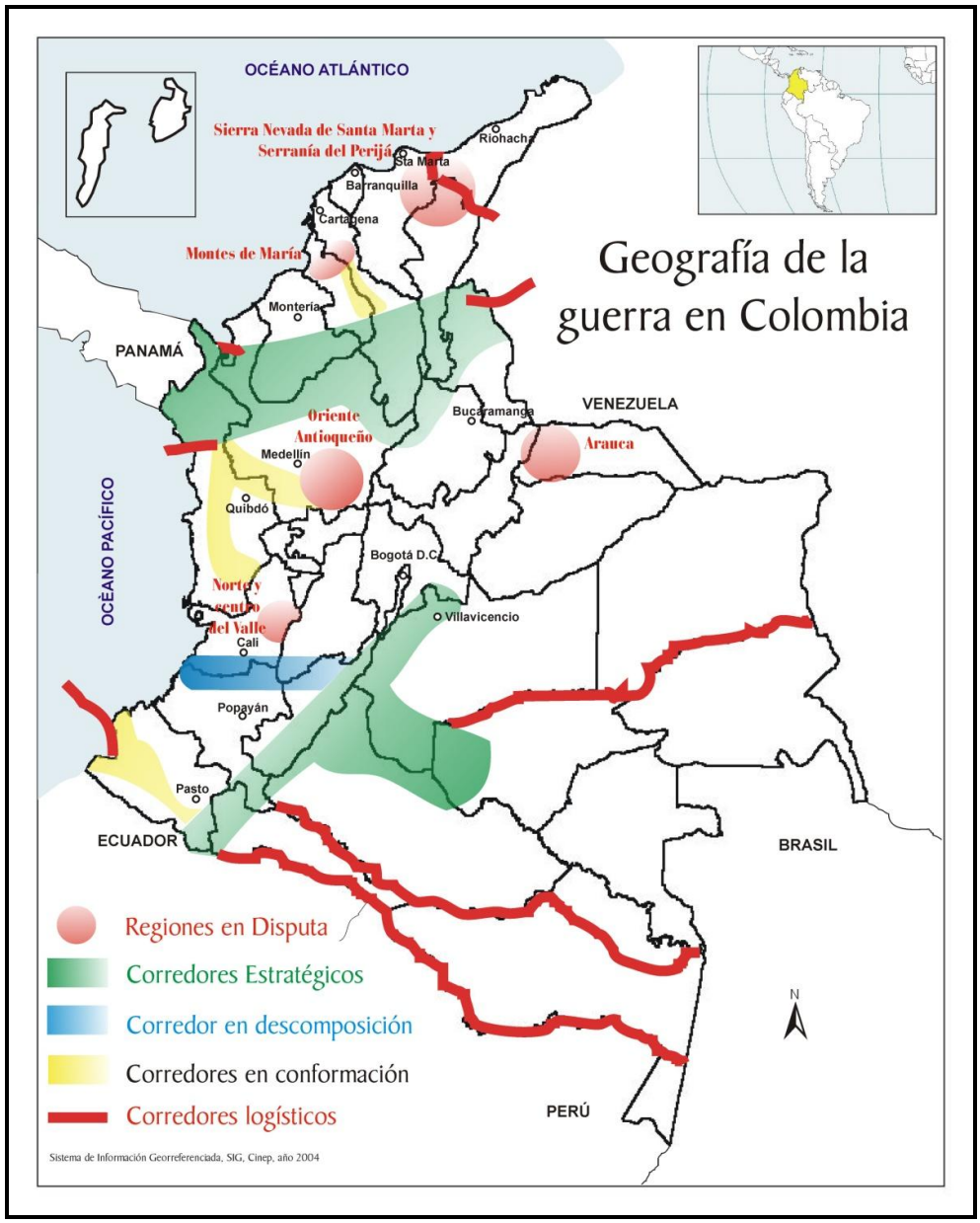


Figure 52: Another NGO's spatial rendering of the problem. (Center for Research and Popular Education.2013). The red lines are 'logistic corridors'; the green are 'strategic corridors'; the blue are 'corridors in decomposition'; yellow are 'corridors in formation'; and the pink cirles are contested areas. The principle message of this map of the geography of the war in Colombia is 'corridors.' A similar earlier map is in González, et al.(2002, p. 135).

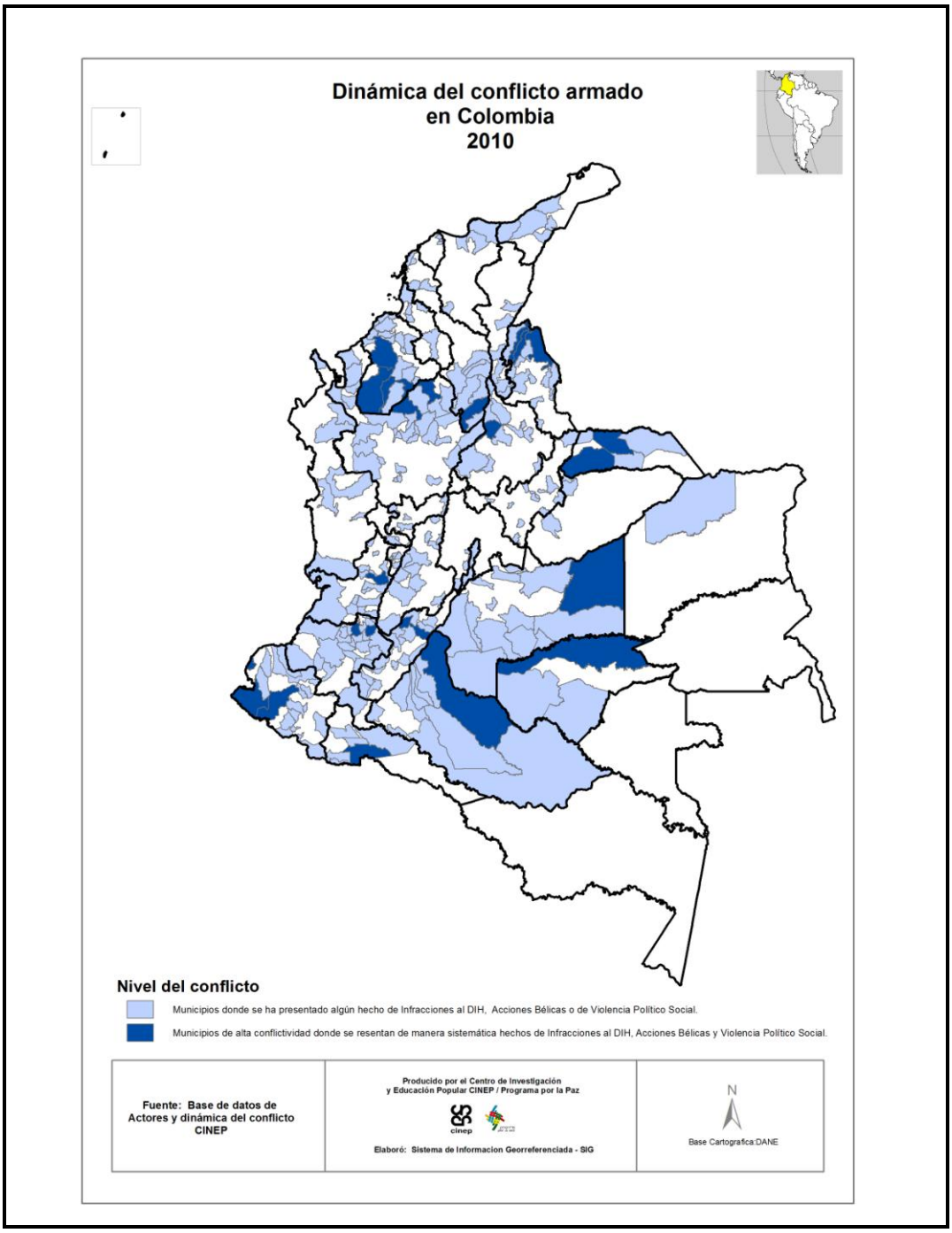


Figure 53: A rendering, also from CINEP, that orients on counties. (Center for Research and Popular Education... 2013) In counties presented in light blue, the map asserts that there had occurred some type of human rights violation. In the counties presented in light blue, the map asserts that there had occurred some type of human rights violation. In the counties presented in dark blue, the assertion is of a high level of conflict to include systematic violations of human rights. The map does not identify perpetrators nor the identities of victims.

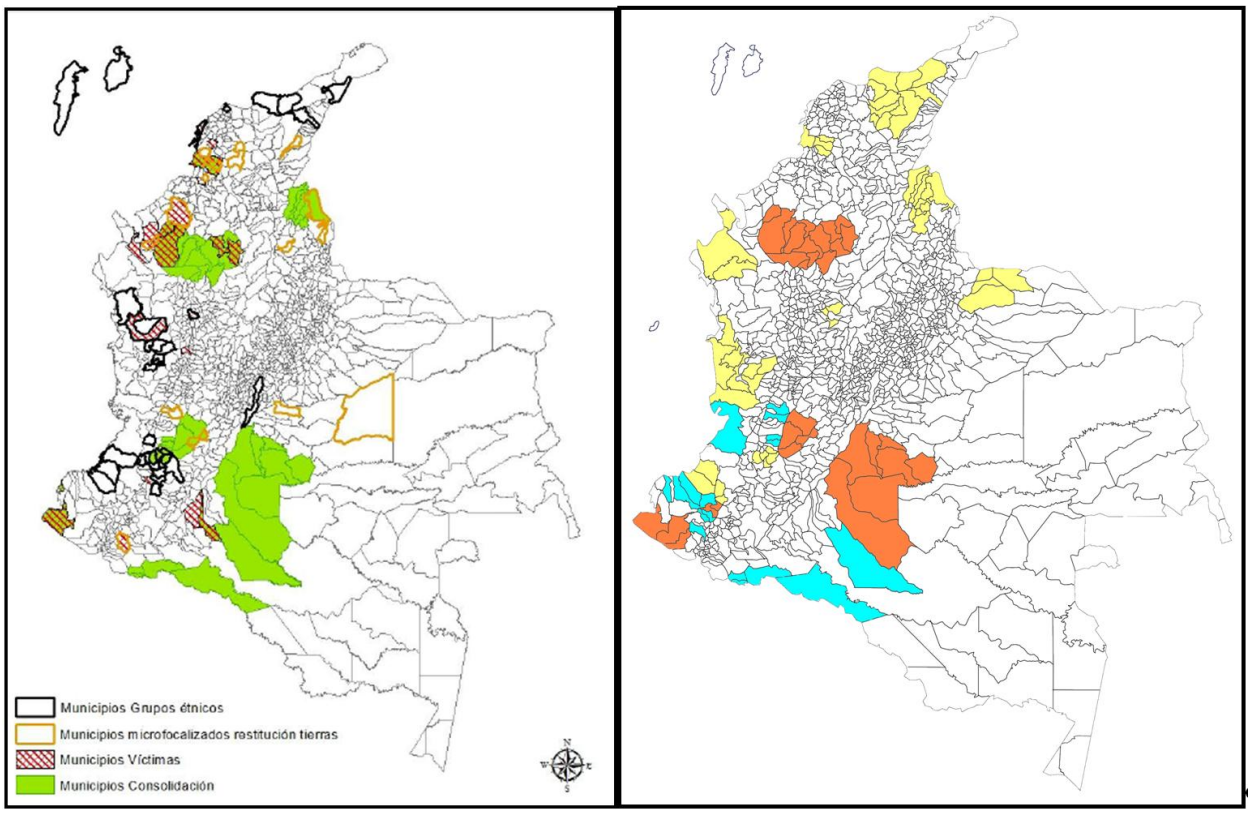


Figure 54: Colombian government priority counties, 2012. (Agency for International Development 2012). On the left, the counties with black outlines are home to indigenous tribes identified for priority attention; the yellow-outlined counties are venues for micro-focused land restitutions; the red hash-marked counties are home to select victim identities with specific grievances the government intended to address as a matter of priority; and the green-colored counties are military consolidation priorities. One intention of the overlay was to visualize the level of coordination of concepts and efforts from various agencies. The map on the right is concerned with 'consolidation' counties (security conditions). The red represents counties that the Colombian government at that moment considered more critical for consolidation efforts, followed by the blue, then yellow counties. The final decision on priorities was to go through numerous changes. The Arauca area along the border with Venezuela, for instance, grew in priority. Note that Arauca, which hwas one of the two original government Consolidation Zones (Figure 46), did not make the 2012 top priorities map. I believe Arauca was put back in as a higher priority area in 2013.

Figure 55 is from the land restitution program office and is closely related in its provenance to Figure 54. It details progress in restitution of mostly agricultural land holdings. Within areas colored in orange, the national government is directly applying national-level administrative assets to implement land transfers. The government reported to have completed

transfers in the areas marked in green. The spatial distribution of the restitutions does not correlate closely with that of the majority of the "where is the war" maps. The reasons for the disparity vary, but include the age of cases, technical ease with which restitutions might be accomplished, a substitution of lands in cases where the original residents did not wish to return to their original holdings, etc. Many displaced families are understandably reluctant to return to areas where illegal violent groups continue to exert influence. Some of the counties identified as consolidation counties in the Nevado del Huila area of northern Cauca/eastern Valle and southern Tolima (Miranda, Corinto, Toribío, etc.) do not appear in Figure 54. The absence of restitution successes is perhaps related to continuing armed conflict in those areas or because, as in the Toribío case, they feature extensive communally owned tribal lands. While some areas in the country are still venues of active military campaigning, other areas are the object of environmental preservation strategies. Recently, for instance, President Santos declared a doubling of the size of Chiribiquete National Park in Caquetá-Guaviare. (Santos August 2013)

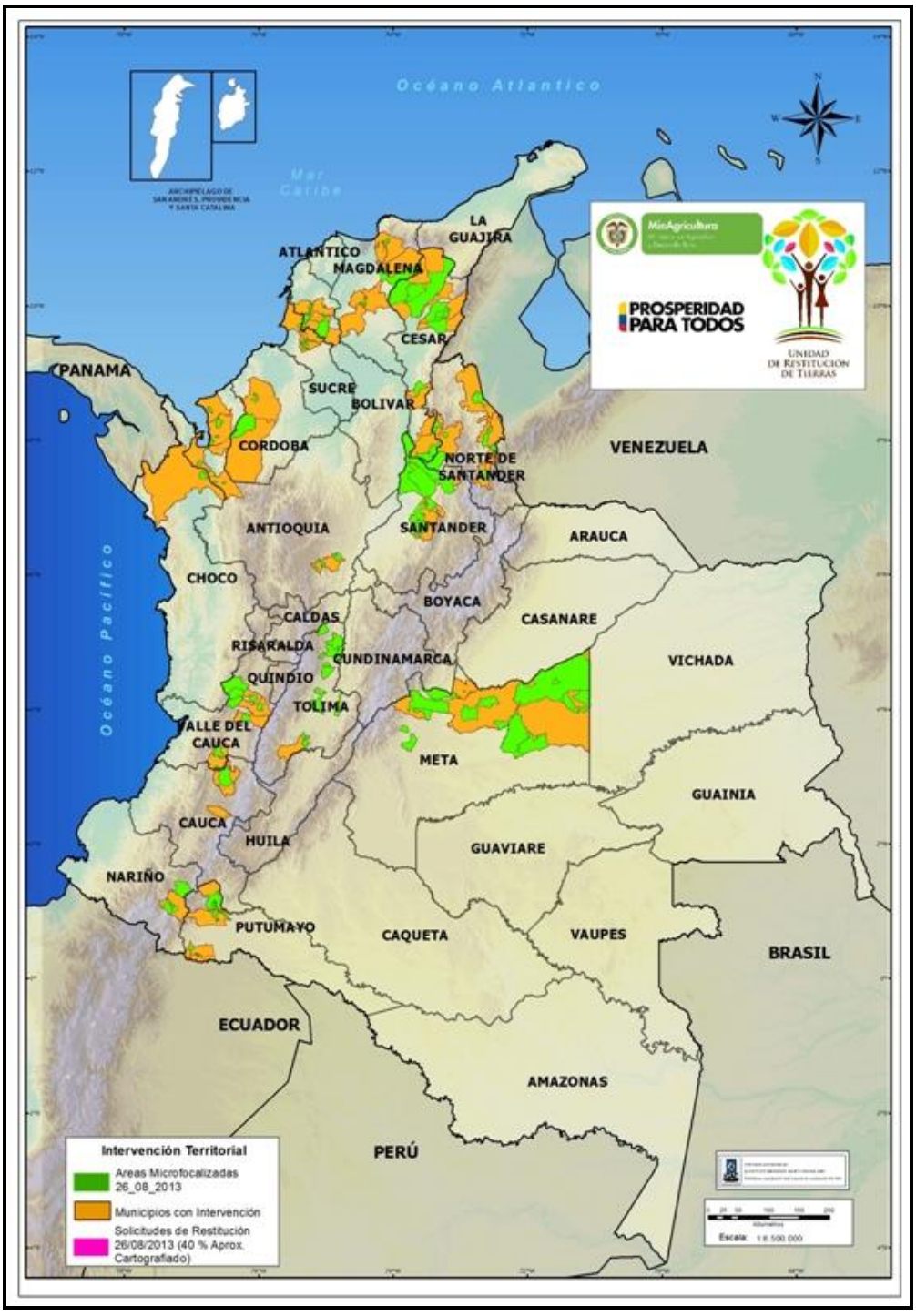


Figure 55: National restitution program priorities. (Unidad de Restitución de Tierras 2013b). The map shows 'microfocalizations' (counties where specific land restitution programs are extant) and green shows counties with completed restitutions. The legend assigns fuscia to represent counties from which solicitations have been recieved, but the map appears to not have been completed such as to match the legend in that respect.

The maps in figures 46-55 reflect a constant tension, discussion, and re-evaluation of priorities for the distribution of limited resources within a context of competing interests and evolving goals. However, I believe most of the areas deemed to be worthy of prioritization are recurrent and obvious, constitute the spatial distribution of the war as perceived in Colombia. The maps are not perfectly contemporaneous, are products of differing methodologies and the underlying data used to build them is not uniform. Together, however, they demonstrate where Colombians think the the war is located within Colombia. Not only is the war region-specific, there have been overall increases and decreases of violence in Colombia as well. From about 1980, violent activities of the main leftist guerrilla organizations, the ELN and the FARC, and of the paramilitary AUC rose until 2003-2005. Then, after the government more sharply challenged those groups (demobilization in the case of the AUC), the violence generally decreased. Colombian researchers have exhaustively depicted this in graphic form as a statistical reflection of various kinds of violence totals (Gutierrez, et al. 2006, pp. 505-542) and spatially by county. (Gutierrez, et al. 2006 pp 357-367; Restrepo and Aponte 2009. pp. 264-269).

Why the Colombian struggle has been so intense here and not there, why it has lasted as long as it has or why one actor and not another succeeds at any given time can be answered without striving to answer *why* there is violence in Colombia or *what* the Colombians are fighting about. In the last decade or so, Colombians' process of answering the *where* often featured marking the worst conflict zones using counties and county groups. The costs of the war can be associated with a limited set of counties. The various prioritizations (of Colombian focus, effort or concern) vary as to the counties highlighted, but they rarely display more than 150. In most depictions of the war the number of counties is about half that. Although they vary from one analysis to another, almost all Colombian depictions delimit the war to within a total of

about twenty percent of Colombia's 1,100 counties. It appears that about five percent of the counties, or a little over fifty in total, can be currently considered the location of the warfare. Some effects or costs of the war are felt universally, and many, such as internal displacement, affect counties that are not direct venues of violence. Landmines appear in almost half the counties. While their effect can be devastating, the vast majority of injury-causing detonations occur within the five percent of counties where the war is most actively contested.

Figure 56 highlights areas that Colombians recurrently display in their maps of the war. It is my interpretation and summary of their expressions of the spatial distribution of events, effects and plans (Figures 29-55). Later I discuss the first eleven zones: Santa Marta, Montes de Maria, Catatumbo, Paramillo, Arauca, Comuna 13 Medellín, Magdalena Medio, Cundinamarca, Nevado del Huila, Macarena/Caguán/Guaviare, and Putumayo. This is the same order as in the Contents and in Figure 87, p.248. The order follows no geographical or historical rigor, but is for convenience in reading based on how the labels appear in Figure 87. The war has been going on for five decades and not all fifteen areas have been salient in all decades. The Colombian government does not currently consider them all as top priorities for the application of resources, military or otherwise, in part because of expensive successes achieved against guerrilla groups. That is to say, all eleven may not currently be focal points of the internal war, but all eleven at one time were. I omit discussion of the Urabá/Atraco, Tumaco, and Eastern Antioquia and Buenaventura areas (12-16 in Figure 56) for efficiency and to avoid repetition.

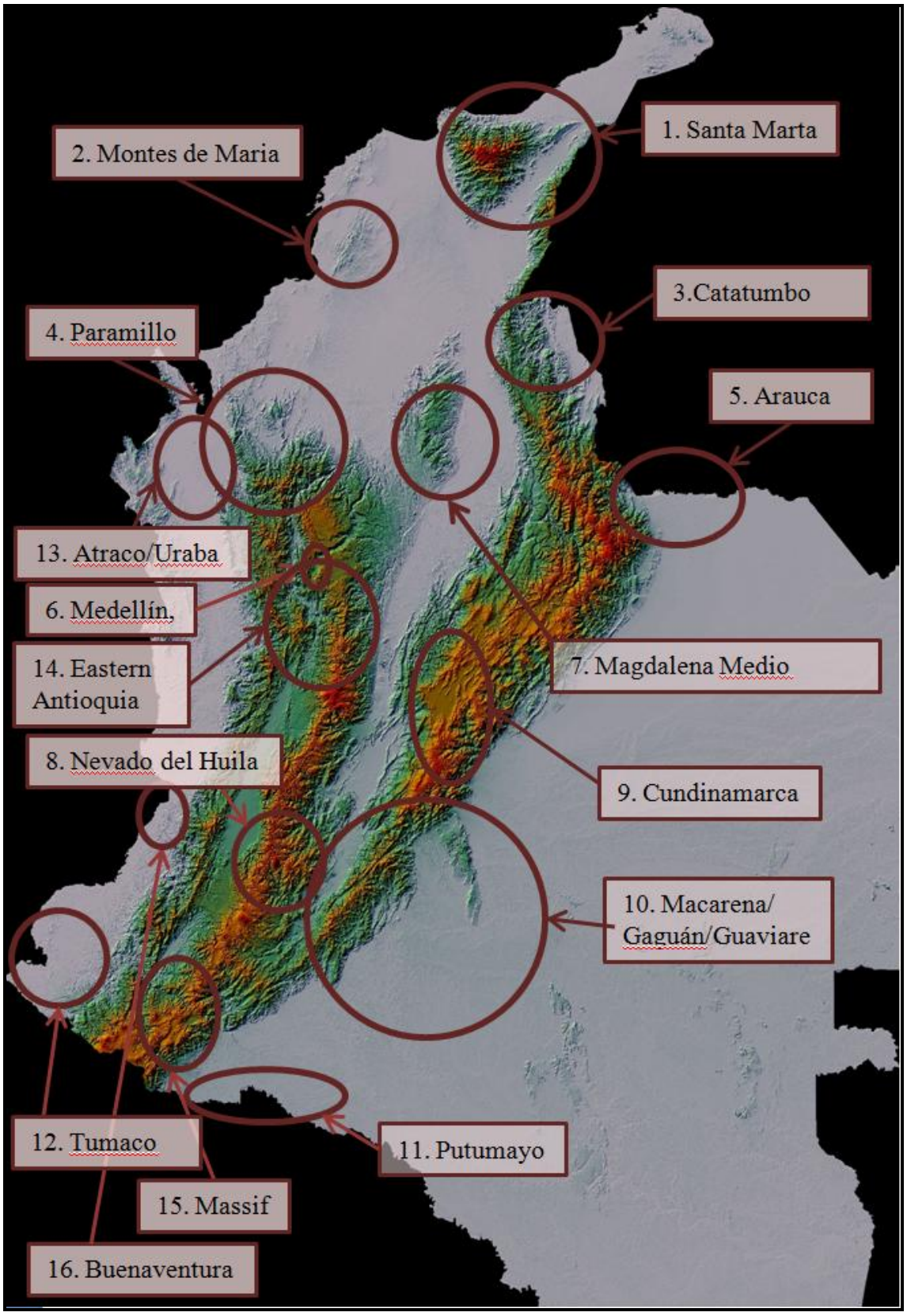


Figure 56: Where I perceive the war to have been or to be concentrated within Colombia.

Why some Colombian guerrillas have survived and some have not

> "If he were not of great ability he would have died last night. It seems to me you do not understand politics, Inglés, nor guerrilla warfare. In politics and this other the first thing is to continue to exist. Look how he continued to exist last night." (Hemingway 1940, p. 284)

The anti-communist AUC was for a period of time the second most powerful guerrilla organization in Colombia, and doing considerable damage to the FARC. Between late 2004 and early 2006 the bulk of the AUC had turned in its weapons and the great majority of its fighters took advantage of a government amnesty and reinsertion program. In fact, far more young men took advantage of the amnesty than anyone thought were possibly in the AUC. Why did the AUC surrender and not survive to defy the state?

In comparing the internal warfare in Colombia with that of the warfare in Vietnam and in the Philippines, Professor Russell Ramsey offered a useful list of reasons why some insurgent organizations do better over time than others. His 1981 *Peasant Revolution* dates to a time when the Colombian internal conflict only seemed old, not eternal, and much has changed in Colombia since its writing. The following 'Applicable Factors Chart' from *Peasant Revolutions* is nevertheless a useful discussion guide.

-- "Foreign military forces present."

Ramsey asserted this to be a net negative for a government and notes that no foreign military forces were present in Colombia. Few are today.

-- “Foreign anti-revolutionary material aid.”

Ramsey saw this as a positive factor for a government and noted that the US and Britain gave Colombia limited aid. United States aid was substantially increased under Plan Colombia in the late 1990s.

-- “Foreign anti-revolutionary sympathy.”

Ramsey noted that military regimes in Spain and Latin America, as well as US governmental leaders and some Catholic and commercial interests, supported the Colombian government. Except for continuous support from the United States, the Colombian government has since enjoyed only intermittent or tepid support from foreign governments in recent years.

-- “Anti-revolutionary indigenous forces.”

Regarding Colombia, Ramsey identified the National Police and conservative gangs in this category. Today, the ‘indigenous’ anti-revolutionary forces in Colombia are a large government military establishment that has occasionally been assisted by other anti-revolutionary groups, most prominently the organizations belonging to the AUC.

-- “Geographic contiguity of a pro-revolutionary ally.”

In 1981, Ramsey identified a ‘limited role’ by Venezuela. In the last decade or so, Venezuela has played a much greater role in assisting the anti-government forces in Colombia, especially the ELN and the FARC. The Ecuadoran government has at times also been guilty of at least accessorial behavior.

-- “Foreign pro-revolutionary material ally.”

As to this factor, Ramsey observed ‘slight aid’ from Venezuelan elements. Today, Venezuelan aid is determinant in the sense that it provides sanctuary and safe passage for communist guerrilla groups.

-- “Foreign pro-revolutionary material assistance.”

Ramsey cites “US and Latin American liberal groups.” This is still true today to a degree, but the FARC and ELN have little need for material assistance from such groups.

-- “Foreign pro-revolutionary sympathy.”

This is as true today as it was during Ramsey’s observations....

-- “Unfavorable land tenure pattern.”

Ramsey opined that this condition, which was almost synonymous with unbalanced ownership, assisted revolutionary prospects. He thought that in Colombia the problem was ‘moderate to bad.’ Land continues to be a central issue, but ‘tenure’ is now broadly accepted as a complex term in an ambiguous context. There is far more to the land ownership puzzle than “tenure patterns” can contain. Using land policies to help solve the internal conflict still seems a good idea, but setting the shape of those policies is its own conflict.

Ramsey goes on to suggest that “accepting the premise that not all factors are applicable even to these case studies, we can take factors which have demonstrated commonality and rate them in order of impact on these three revolutions.” (Ramsey 1981, p. 206) He continues his list, indicating with one word how he thought Colombia rated as to the impact:

-- ‘Historical revolutionaryism and secret societal patterns’ -low in Colombia

-- ‘Historical maltreatment by colonial power’ -low in Colombia

-- ‘Proclivity to violence for the solution of problems’ -high in Colombia

-- ‘Physical presence of colonial power’ -not applicable in Colombia

-- ‘Rugged topography for revolutionary base area’ -high in Colombia

-- ‘Accessible border with pro-revolutionary ally’ -medium in Colombia

-- ‘Peasant apathy toward change’ -high in Colombia

-- ‘Impact of religion as a non-violent restraining force’ -low in Colombia

-- ‘Unfavorable land tenure as a frustrating force’ -medium in Colombia

-- ‘Existence of a violence continuum’ -low in Colombia

-- ‘Revolutionary leadership’ -low in Colombia

-- ‘Revolutionary leadership or élan’ -medium in Colombia

-- ‘Economic aid from pro-revolutionary ally’ -medium in Colombia

-- ‘Dynamic attitude of counter-revolutionary forces’ -medium in Colombia

(Ramsey 1981, 206)

Probably the most important environmental factor absent when Professor Ramsey asserted his list was the immense financial wherewithal available to the FARC through commodities predation and direct involvement in coca cultivation and cocaine trade. Looking at the only factor that Ramsey identified as especially high and clearly favoring a revolutionary force was ‘rugged topography for revolutionary base area.’ In later decades, he probably would have added border accessibility to a pro-revolutionary ally as highly favorable to Colombian revolutionaries.

Considering the Ramsey list and the now defunct AUC, I propose there are five basic reasons why the AUC all but disappeared. The AUC did not have a foundational purpose other than to oppose the communist-inspired FARC, ELN and EPL. It did not have or was it able to create any extensive physical sanctuaries within or outside of Colombia. Most AUC members and leaders were not from remote areas. They were ultimately not able to permanently implant themselves in remote parts of Colombia suitable as sanctuaries. The AUC embarked on military adventures into Tolima and the Guaviare river basin to compromise FARC lines of

communication and disrupt or deny the FARC sanctuary, but did not build jungle redoubts as had the FARC. The AUC had no long-term plan to build sanctuaries by creating distance between themselves and government forces. The AUC leadership, in fact, refused to consider the Colombian Army as an enemy. (Aranguren Molina, Mauricio 2001) Add to this that the AUC could count on very little international support, especially from neighboring countries. In addition, the AUC did not have a systematic method of leader replacement as has the FARC. As the AUC leaders died or were killed, AUC leadership suffered.

The reasons given for why the AUC failed to sustain itself: Lack of positive mission; loss of leadership; intimacy with state agents; lack of international support; and (most significantly) the near total lack of physical sanctuary – does not include loss of popular legitimacy. In spite of murderous violent behavior, the popularity of the AUC seems at no time to have been less than that of the FARC. This is not to say that popular legitimacy, and the moral legitimacy that would ideally produce popular legitimacy, is not important. It is just that in Colombia's context of many horrors, comportment of the AUC was a lesser factor in its demise.

To contrast with the demise of the AUC, FARC longevity owes to a fixed and maintained ideological azimuth; continuity of leadership; long-term international support, especially in the local region; and (most importantly) the ability to create and maintain physical sanctuaries within and outside the political borders of Colombia. Some amount of local popular legitimacy has been necessary to assure those physical sanctuaries, and the FARC has successfully achieved that necessary amount. Popular legitimacy, however, has been a secondary factor and concomitantly, the FARC's moral comportment has not. The most successful period, militarily and territorially, for the FARC was in the late 1990s. The FARC came to control great swaths of Colombia's eastern jungle plains. It is true that the FARC could count on the willing support of a sizeable

portion of the population in those eastern plains. The FARC protected or paid many thousands of young men employed as coca leaf pickers, processors and transporters.

The above observation/assertion is significant to the proposal of this dissertation in that, if the creation of physical sanctuary is in fact the *ultima ratio* or *sine qua non* of guerrilla survival, and not popular legitimacy, then theory regarding which geographical realities favor the guerrilla is similarly important. Ramsey asserts,

> "The relatively greater influence of a geographically contiguous pro-revolutionary ally over other factors tends to overshadow other determinants in these case studies. Further, the role of a foreign ally which supports the counter-revolutionary forces appears considerably less significant than the role of a pro-revolutionary ally."

A supportive Venezuelan government is a central column of survivability for the FARC and the ELN, as mountain terrain had been earlier in their histories. Even as cocaine gave financial autonomy to the FARC (as oil has, if to a lesser degree, for the ELN), FARC leaders eventually had to depend on Venezuelan sanctuary to stay alive. Two broad categories of geographic phenomena – the geographies of commodities on which to feed and geographies that help make physical escape viable -- are the twin sources of guerrilla longevity.

Section 4. Distance as a Determinant of Competitive Prospects

Zero distance

An insurgent modus operandi or standard operating procedure is to meld into the population in civilian clothes and disappear on the metro after an action, at least in urban situations. In such a setting, insurgents will fear a system that checks individual identity when persons enter the train station, or a local neighborhood full of people willing and able to report the presence of strangers. A rebel's line of retreat is made less secure to the extent he does not enjoy anonymity. Every system that makes individuals identify themselves makes the fugitive's line of retreat a little less secure. It means that every action the rebel takes is more likely to be taken beyond his culminating point. He is forced beyond his risk-distance. As the number of fugitives increases, the danger of exposing the whereabouts of sanctuaries or routes to them is multiplied accordingly. To the extent Colombia established systems that endangered insurgent anonymity, the government forced the insurgents into inhospitable areas, that is, toward remoteness. As plan Colombia progressed after about 2000, and included the development of increasingly sophisticated Colombian government intelligence methods and technologies, the zones to which insurgents could retreat and remain anonymous shrank.

In the explanation-of-terms paragraphs in section II, Methodology, I distinguish three types of sanctuary as furtive, patent and governance. The three intermingle or co-constitute, but are nevertheless observable as tendencies. When a group forms to commit some act or acts that might be considered a perpetration of illegality or immorality that induces a will toward punishment by some authority able to impose that punishment, then the perpetrating group (if it

has any sense at all) keeps the identities of its members secret - maintains anonymity to the degree possible. This may seem so obvious as to not require mention, but to explain the geography of impunity and therefore risk distance it is essential to note the relevant characteristic of the phenomenon. During that period when a perpetrator can maintain perfect anonymity, the place of his or her sanctuary is everyplace, everywhere. He does not need to create physical distance between himself and the policeman, soldier or competing perpetrator who would pursue him if the anonymity were compromised. The perpetrator can exist safely at zero physical distance from his pursuers. His risk is determined by secrecy and deception, not distance. He faces, in effect, no risk distance. The space of his sanctuary has the same geographic extent as his other spaces and he needs no physical remoteness. Imperfections in anonymity can take a number of forms. Perhaps a perpetrator can maintain anonymity in one set of spaces and not others, or perhaps the anonymity is healthy and valid as to most everyone, but not in the company of certain other people or at certain times of the day. Maintenance of perfect anonymity is difficult, and ultimately impossible if, for instance, a perpetrator is intent on increasing illicit profits from some illegal activity, or on leading a political movement. To the extent that anonymity weakens and/or to the extent the perpetrator decides to forego anonymity for the purposes of his material or ideological enterprise, that perpetrator must find or develop physical sanctuary, and therefore needs more than zero distance. He must create distance to sanctuary. He must attend to shortening the distances to the culminating points of his pursuers (their risk distances) and to the lengthening of his own.

Movement under duress

Colombian scholars and officials of all political types describe the open high ground depicted in the middle of Figure 28 (where there are no roads shown) as a communications hub. They will say that from the remote highlands of the Nevado del Huila one can go east to the jungles of Meta and Caquetá, north toward the nation's capital, west to the Pacific port of Buenaventura, or south, passing out of the Colombian Massif to Ecuador. The observation is obviously true and simultaneously ridiculous. Every map of Colombian road or river networks, or of altitudes or seasonal weather disruptions tells the same story, one that every Colombian seems to understand: that it is a region *around* which one travels to get places, not *through* which. The road network in Figure 28, highly developed in the valleys of the Cauca and Magdalena rivers, hardly extends at all into the middle of the central cordillera. The roadless middle is nevertheless a roundhouse for those who wish to elude law enforcement and to have open travel options if they travel under duress. It is indeed a hub for transportation -- of contraband and escape. While the contraband areas do not count on improved roads that can be used regularly by most motor vehicles, they are typically criss-crossed with trails that can be navigated by foot, pack aninmal, or perhaps a motorcycle. The transportation geography of furtive or fugitive traffic is different from that of innocent traffic. At altitude, the headwaters are easier to cross, ancient pathways lead in all directions, and the urgent traveler can impose intolerable costs and risks on his pursuers. That is to say, the escaper can shorten the distance to the pursuer's culminating point, the pursuer's *risk distance*. Any traveler has to be patient in such a region, as passage is not as fast as it would be going around the 'long' way. The cost distances are great. For the guerrilla it helps to have rifles and landmines in order to further decrement the already disproportionately short risk distances faced by the pursuers.

Figure 58 highlights several highly conflictive counties in the northern Cauca/south-eastern Valle del Cauca region, most of which have appeared on government plans and prioritizations as counties needing special attention. In Figure 58, I also included Inzá, Jamundí and Yumbo counties because they are a focus of attention elsewhere in the text. They do not today receive special government priority, but they are sites of historic *tomas* and massacres. Figure 59 shows the 'consolidation' counties selected from out of the northern Cauca/Valle del Cauca region by the Colombian military as recent priorities. The image in Figure 59 is an example of many similar 'stoplight' graphics that show where guerrilla presence is greatest within the counties. In all these graphics, green is good and red is bad, meaning more guerrilla presence in red areas. The pattern is almost universal; the red areas are uphill. Figure 60 is of Miranda county, which I chose from among its neighbors because that county's website had the best looking map, but also because it may be a somewhat exaggerated example. What it relates, however, is typical of hundreds of counties in Colombia. Watercourses often invited the original political shapes of the counties. The deciders created a political geography in Miranda that is longer than wide and within which the physical geography includes lowland, foothill, and mountain terrain. Figure 122 shows a spatial distribution of landmine phenomena in the area. As might be expected, the people of Miranda experience landmines in the upsloping part of their county that leads toward the Nevado del Huila sanctuary. The political shape of Miranda county came into being partly because the river boundaries were easy to see and maintain. The shapes also owe to travel cost-distances. In Miranda county, the walking paths uphill snake along and between the larger streams. In effect, the shape of Miranda county is a typical shape for smuggling geography. Control of the Miranda county government could be especially useful to the smuggler, or to a guerrilla. The location of Miranda County within the country is also

favorable for the smuggler in that a major urban center, Cali, is not far away (downhill to the west). Large urban centers facilitate the smugglers' search for money laundering opportunities and for selling product. Figures 88 and 89 on pages 250 and 251 show that many of the counties of the Santa Marta Region have the same combination of political and physical geographic attributes. Like Miranda County the smuggler counties of Santa Marta are in close proximity to a major city, Santa Marta. Likewise, counties outside Bogotá or Medellín enjoy similar sets of contraband-favorable characteristics. Colombia does not just offer mountainous terrain to the smuggler.

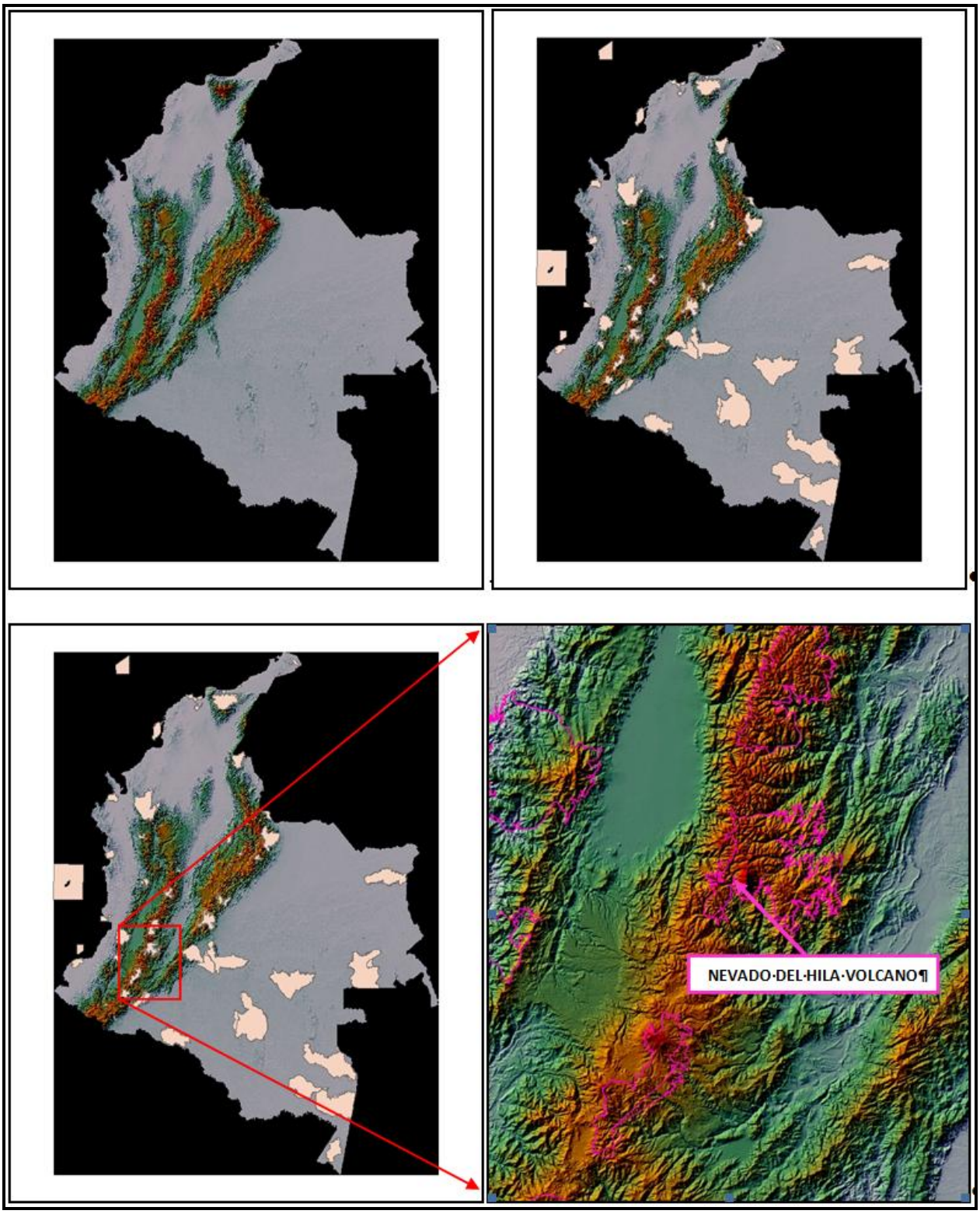


Figure 57: Zoom in the elevation model to the Nevado del Huila area.

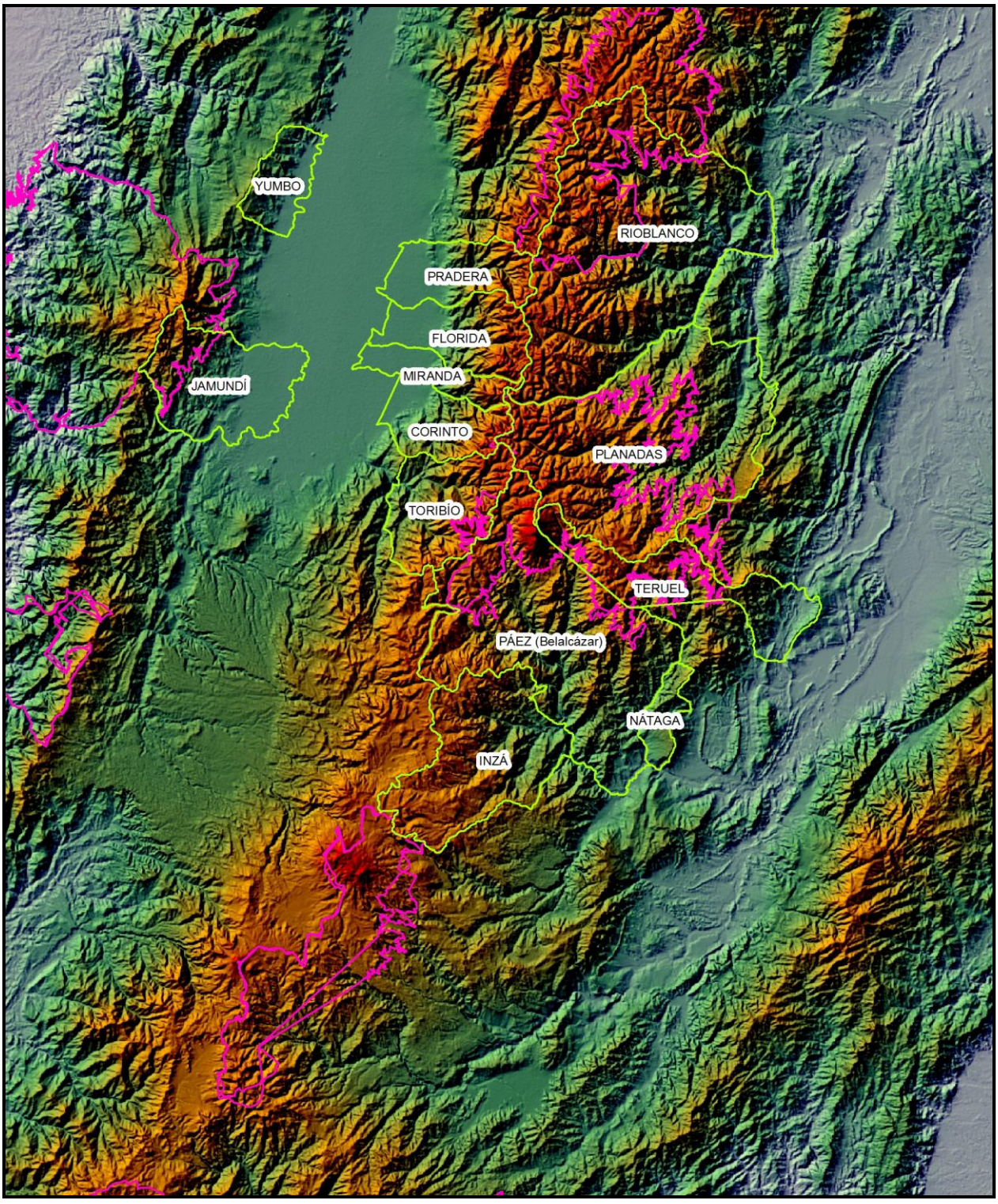


Figure 58: Selected counties and major national parks. (base data from SIGOT 2013).

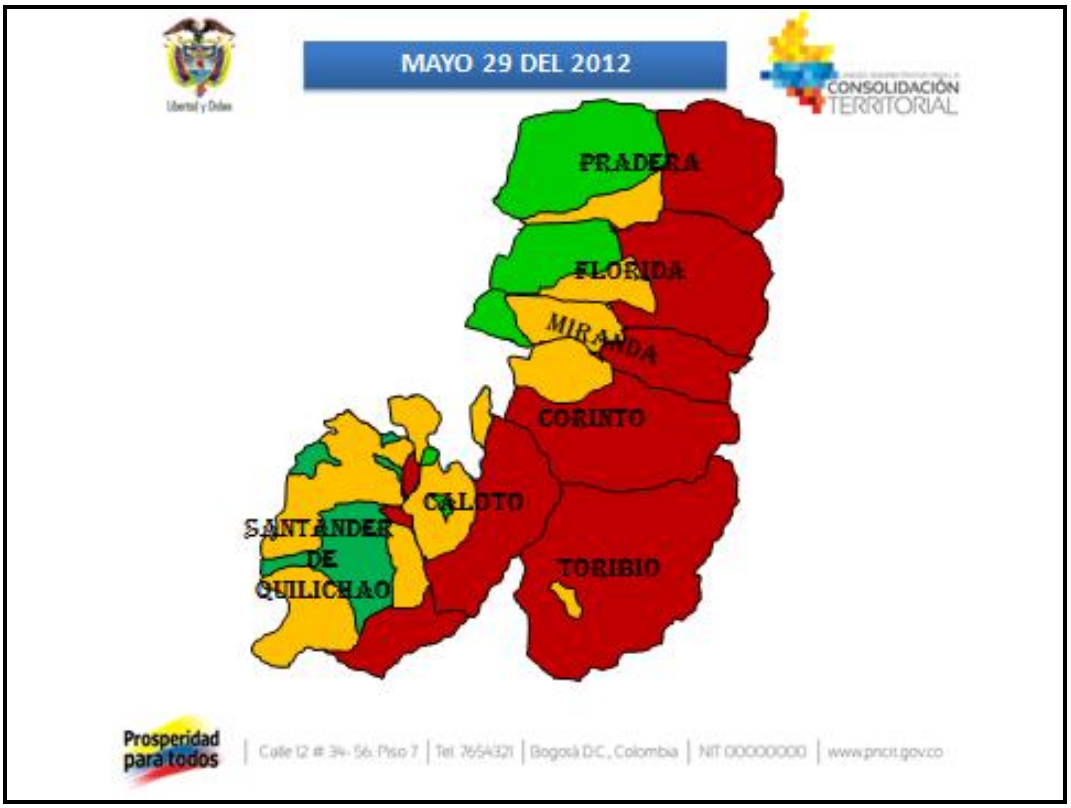


Figure 59: Red/Yellow/Green analysis of priority counties. Red means most guerrilla presence. Red also correlates generally to the uphill slope. Note Miranda County in the middle of the set.

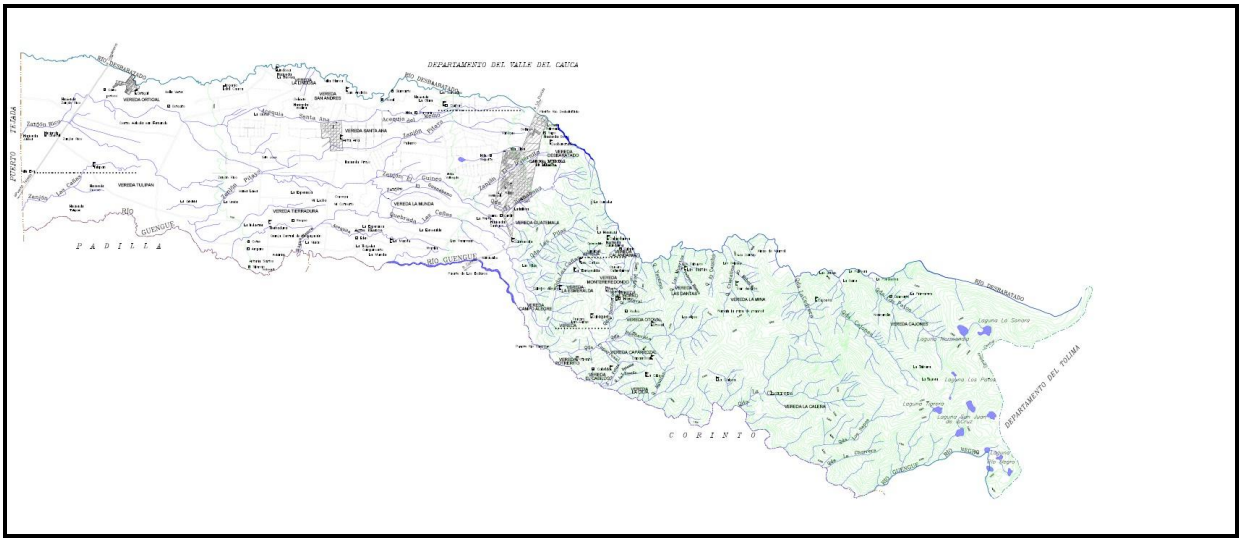


Figure 60: Miranda County. (Alcaldía de Miranda, Cauca 2013) Note the political shape and the terrain types. Uphill is to the east, to the right. Miranda is the northernmost county in Cauca Department. Landmine phenomena occur in the middle of the county, in the lower uphill portion of the county. (See Figure 122).

The effect of gravity

Gravity is among those few 'independent' variables to affect human behavior and outcomes in human competition. With some limited if spectacular exceptions, gravity controls our behavior, not vice versa. In Colombia and in irregular wars generally, the cumulative effect of gravity can be summarized by the effect it causes during escape and pursuit. (Figure 60) is a stylized rendering of a digital elevation model at very small scale. It shows a small network of mountain streams flowing downhill from east to west, the topography the result of millennia of erosive action in a wet climate. During a typical pursuit, the party under duress, that is, the group trying to escape, typically will move uphill, in this case from west to east. At point A, on the left or west side of the image, where two watercourses conflow, is a point at which the pursuing force (in Colombia, in the vast majority of occasions government forces will be the pursuers) faces a decision. The leader of the pursuing force has to decide whether to go left or right, up one valley or the other. If he chooses incorrectly, his pursuit will likely fail. If he divides his force, his strength diminishes by half and he may subject part of it to encirclement and ambush. Therefore, regardless of any other factor, or any action on the part of the pursued, the distance to the culminating point of the pursuing force, its perceived *risk distance*, has been shortened. (remembering that the culminating point is that theoretical point in time and space beyond which it is imprudent (too risky) to proceed). Gravity alone has given a distinct advantage to the party trying to escape uphill, especially in wet terrain. The fugitive can amplify if not multiply the advantage by using landmines or snipers. Moreover, this single gravity-induced effect on a pursuer's risk distance has a direct spatial relationship to otherwise remote communities. Many of the rural communities of greatest interest to the contestants in the Colombian armed conflict are those just downhill from that point on the ground where the

pursuer is challenged with the decision to go left or right. Tacueyó, Toribío County, Cauca is one such town.

Looking at Figure 61, suppose that a fugitive group is being chased uphill toward the top of this nominal terrain. When the pursuing group gets to a certain point (marked with a red X on the drawing), and supposing the pursuers do not know up which of the streams, left or right, the fugitives went, the risk distance for that pursuing force shrinks just by the fact of having to make a decision imposed by the terrain. The fugitives would much prefer the people in the town at the bottom of the hill not tell the pursuers which way they were likely to have gone. Compare this nominal map to the map in Figure 61 of Toribío County, Cauca, Colombia. Note the town of Tacueyó and its surroundings in the upper middle part of the map. Tacueyó has been a recurrent scene of dramatic mortal events in the Colombian conflict.

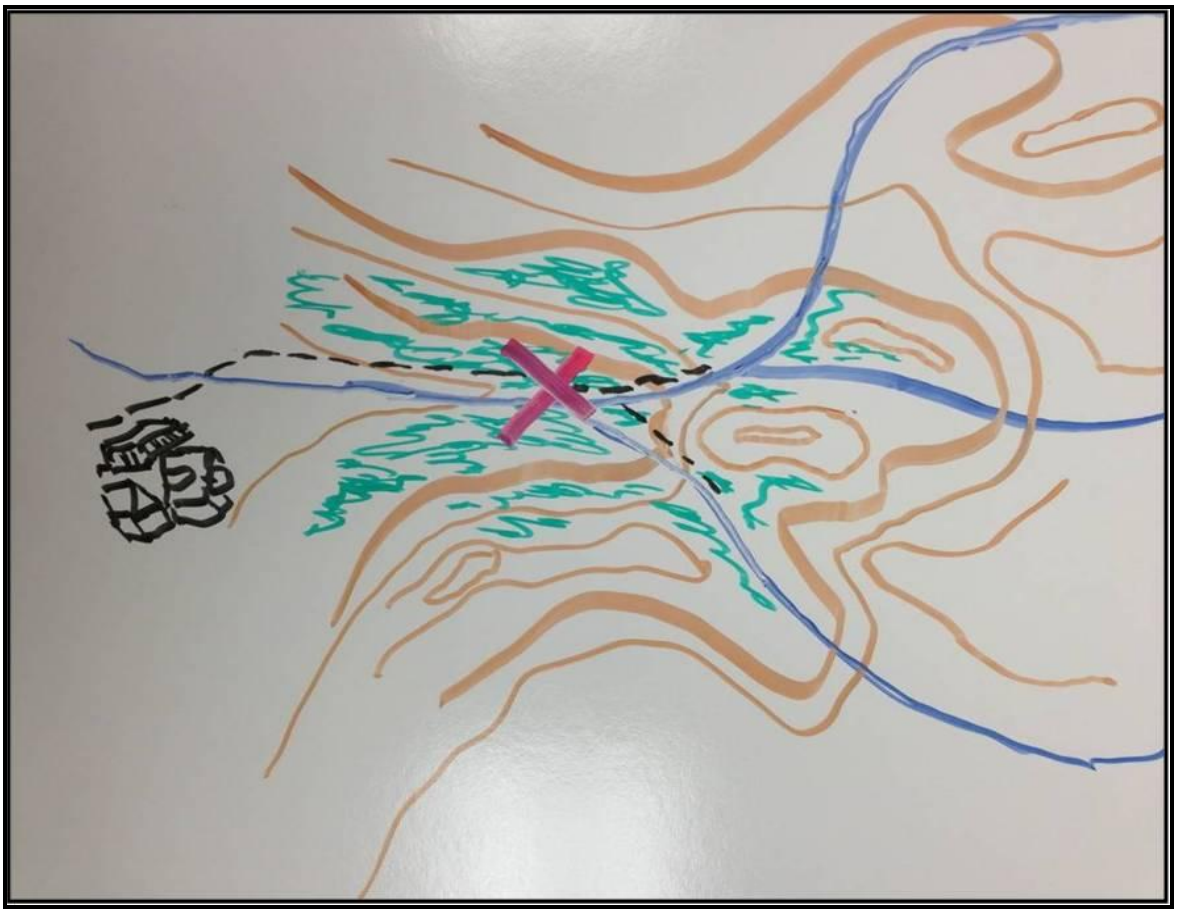


Figure 61: A nominal, typical point at which risk distance decreases in armed pursuits. As the pursuers reach point X on their way uphill, they face a decision, all else being equal) as to which way to go. Both a wrong choice or a decision to split their force impose an element of greater risk.

Figure 62: Autochthonous, informal map of Toribío County, Cauca, Colombia. (Toribío, Sitio oficial de Toribío en Cauca 2012) Note the location of Tacueyó in the upper center. Note how similar the terrain is to the nominal map in Figure 61.

The effect of jungles

In contemplating the weight of slope as a factor of fugitive success, the question of densely vegetated terrain might draw the question how it is that vast flat areas of *selva* (jungle) in Colombia have also been prominent features in both coca cultivation and FARC survival. If all else being equal the balance of risk distances in mountain terrain favors the fugitive, then why does it appear that jungle terrain does as well? The logic does not center on slope or ruggedness of terrain, although such topography serves to highlight the logic. The logic remains one of relative risk distances, especially during the pursuit.

If a guerrilla base area or intended sanctuary were well down-river, we can suppose the speed of movement of both pursuer and pursued to be the same, given equal technologies, and that the pursuers' problem of knowing which route the fugitives are taking is much simplified. The fugitive, however, can set ambushes along the banks as they pass downriver. In other words, the escapees can still increase the risk distances of the pursuer. The pursued can artificially decrease the distance to the pursuers' culminating point. Moreover, at some point the pursuing force has to go home, has to go back up river. If they do not bring along enough food, bullets and fresh water to get back home, they face an uphill pursuit in which the pursuer (formerly pursued) might not suffer the disadvantage of ignorance regarding the routes back to base of the government force. The calculation of getting back home is part of the initial calculation of distance to the culminating point.

Although ambushes present unique challenges in jungle terrain, the more significant operational effect of Colombia's jungles is simple Euclidean distance, combined with the fact that older technologies used to overcome distances are easily suppressible. Airplanes, for instance, require airstrips. A fugitive force can easily prevent the use of an isolated jungle airstrip by using simple barriers and small arms fire. Roads are sparse and are subject to easy ambush, as are the rivers. Although steepness and ruggedness of the surface is nothing compared to the mountainous highlands of the cordilleras, the fugitive can create much of the same decision perplexity for the pursuer using the slight increases in terrain elevations between many of the rivers. In addition, the guerrillas have been ingenious in creating decision conundrums for their pursuers by creating false pathways and booby-trapping others.

Many of the jungle areas still pose an extreme disease threat as well, and for soldiers who are not properly acclimatized, trained and protected, the terrain presents daunting health

challenges. Cost distances can be higher in jungle areas during some parts of the year than mountain terrain, as a few of the military setbacks suffered by the government (such as at Las Delicias, Billar and Miraflores) attest. The fugitive FARC has been able find and build sanctuary in jungle terrain, but that ecosystem is clearly not the FARC leaders' preference. They have constantly tried to move headquarters back up hill, back in the direction of the old *repúbliquetas*. Over the same years, the government has extended the distances to its culminating points during jungle pursuits by increasing the number of personnel, but also by applying better intelligence, much of it highly technical. Aircraft operating range and loitering times have increased, and remote sensing of human presence has advanced greatly. As the government has overcome FARC advantages for escape in both mountainous and lowland selvatico (densely vegetated jungle) jungle terrains, the FARC has increasingly had to depend on the advantage provided by international borders.

The effect of borders

If we were to imagine a daring, defiant rabbit whose mission in life was to eat carrots right in front of every dog in the neighborhood and then run, and if every dog in the neighborhood were collared to a long chain, the rabbit would only have to outrun the dogs to the ends of the dogs' chains. That space beyond all of the chains is sanctuary for the rabbit, but if there were no space outside the length of all the chains, the rabbit will likely be consigned to his fate -- if all the dogs are alert and resolute. The chains define a specific geographic limitation for each dog. It is imposed by the dog's master because the master feels he or she takes too much risk to allow the dog to go free, not perhaps because of the danger posed by pirate rabbits, but

because of other dogs and other masters. International borders act on national armies in a similar way as the chains work on the dogs.

The national borders of Colombia have a similar, unequal effect during pursuit and escape as does the country's mountainous terrain or jungle expanses. The international borders greatly favor any fugitive trying to escape official Colombian government pursuers by shortening the risk distances of those pursuers, usually without at all shortening the risk distances of the fugitives. When the fugitive comes to an international border he is rarely slowed by it. In accordance with strict instructions from their hierarchies, Colombian Army and police units, meanwhile, have been careful to respect the borders, and to not cross into neighboring sovereign territory. The boundaries are themselves generally the product of some degree of physical remoteness. The Serranía de Perijá to the west of Lake Maracaibo, for instance, or the dense and swampy Darien region of Panama are examples. Many miles of Colombia's national borders were to some degree set as long river thalwegs, mountain crest lines, or in the middle of dense jungles in order that border remoteness would itself help avoid border conflict -- either by clarity of demarcation, indifference due to inaccessibility or both. Border agreements are logically easier to achieve when there are few economic rights at issue and few personal wealth interests enter to sway negotiations. These characteristics are attractive to the establishers of smuggling routes, as well. Those same routes are of course going to attract a politically-motivated guerrilla that must secretively move weapons and personnel. In Colombia, ancient smuggling experience, and long-established tactical knowledge and informal ownership of the best smuggling routes by extended smuggling families have historically bumped these families up against the guerrillas needing to use the same routes. Sometimes the families overlap, sometimes the smugglers share political partisanship or ideology with the guerrillas, sometimes a deal can be reached,

sometimes the guerrillas do little more for the smugglers than to attract unwanted government forces to the area, and sometimes the government agents have already made business bargains with the smugglers. The possible admixtures vary greatly, but the best terrain remains the same, and whatever group can best establish a favorable balance of risk distances is the group most likely to survive. The bringing of existential power, in the form of credible threat, is often the prevailing method in a given region. The fight for smuggling routes in Colombia does no disservice to those who will assert that political power grows out the barrel of a gun. To the extent an area is remote, the dominant rule might very well be that might makes right.

The international borders of Colombia apparently have not been correlated with violence consistently over time. Socorro Ramírez looked carefully at that relationship. (Gutiérrez, et al. 2006, pp. 121-137). It seems that, according to at least one data set, between 1980 and 1997, only two of the eighteen most violent counties in Colombia were border counties, these being Saravena and Arauca in Arauca Department along the border with Venezuela. The border counties make up only seven percent of the total of counties, but fifty-seven percent of those counties suffered a presence of guerrilla or paramilitary presence. A high percentage of that was along the border with Venezuela. As the illegal armed groups attached themselves to coca, and as the intensity of the war increased (especially after Álvaro Uribe became president) the border counties were increasing affected.

> "Guerrillas and paramilitaries also took advantage of the weakness or absence of the state along the international borders to increase their presence there; seek certain kinds of logistical support from neighboring countries; use strategic corridors in order to control roads or routes by which to move drugs, weapons and contraband such as gasoline, and vie for territorial control where there were

important resources or coca cultivations and processing laboratories." (Gutiérrez, et al. 2006, p. 131).

The Ramírez quote above is quite typical. Even in essays that aim to discuss geostrategic, psychological, social or ideological factors, the description of what is going on always devolves to a containable set of geographic factors. Among these are "weakness or absence of the state." What that means quickly becomes clear. The government of Colombia, in a given area within Colombia, does not have sufficient relative power to keep an illegal armed group from getting away with doing something illegal. The government is not able to close a space of untouchable action. As the government's efforts to expand its coercive capability grew after the peace process with the FARC collapsed, the war pushed outward toward the borders, even as the illegal groups strived to expand coca revenues, which also contributed to a drift toward the international borders.

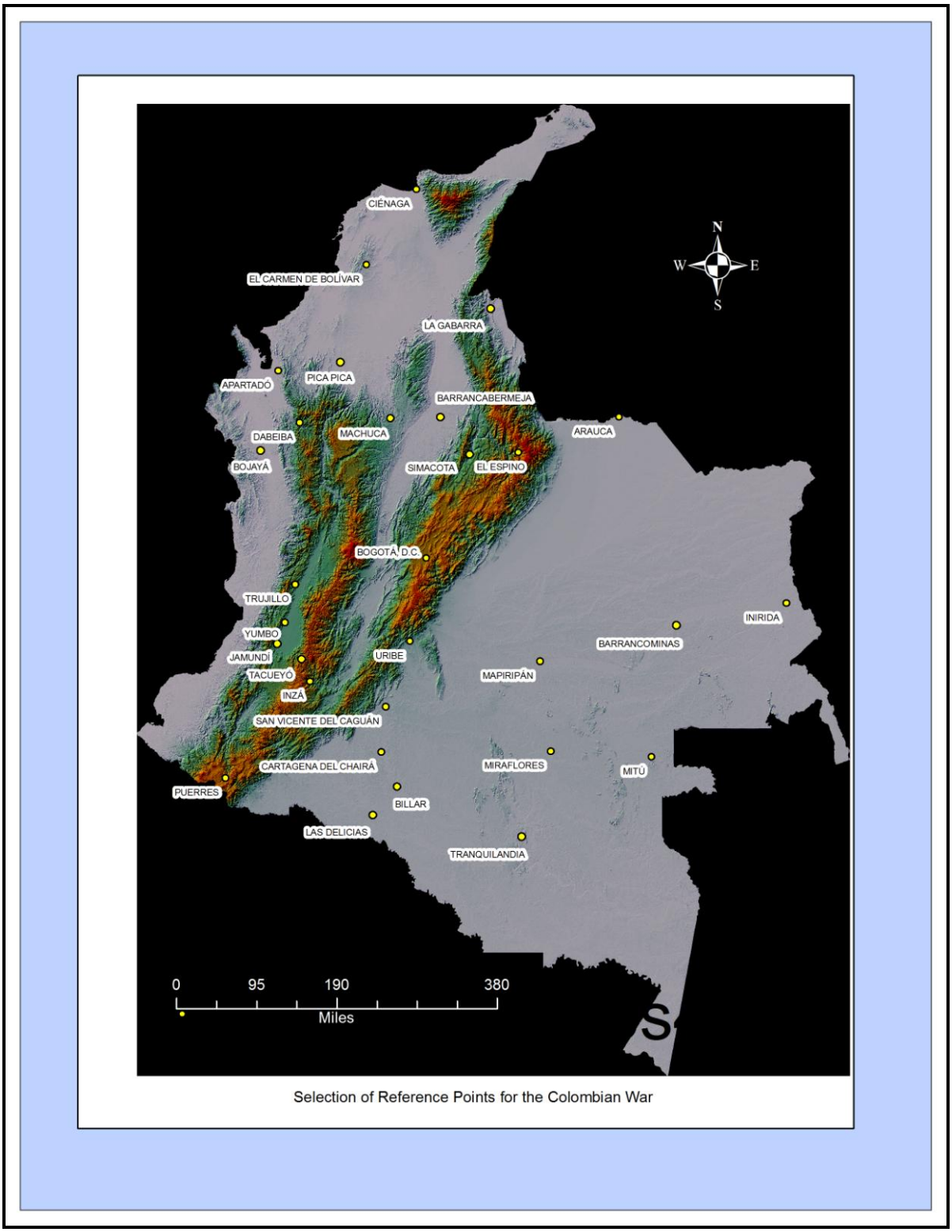
This game of rebalancing risk distances, which could be likened to some sort of intuitive/experiential map algebra in which the distances of all players to their respective culminating points are constantly re-evaluated, affected and then articulated in deadly practice, is the *ultima ratio* of success in the Colombian war. Socio-economic conditions, legal innovations and reforms, propagandistic fashion, electoral organization, international boundaries, and other human geographic factors interact with several distinct physical geographical phenomena. All of it greatly raises the value of a leaders' *coup d`oeil* (ability to measure the competitive advantages and disadvantages of terrain at a glance).

A risk distance interpretation of Colombian armed conflict

What follows in this subsection is a proof in multiple anecdotal form of the assertions made above. I sorted descriptions of several events into five broad categories: Massacres, *Tomas* (takings or occupations), Manhunts, Battles, and Zones. The categories assist in focusing on the cause and effect of differential risk distances. Although the temporal order of the events within the categories is correct, their use jumbles the correct temporal order of their overall occurrence in the presentation. Taking such a liberty can do disservice to a reader's comprehension or inference regarding events' causations, especially given the high probability that the actors in almost every case were acutely aware of the prior happenings. As a partial remedy I include as appendices an Excel spreadsheet and a less inclusive Word document of events in their proper temporal order. The events I selected for discussion within the categories seemed outstanding as milestones of the war according to the way they are treated in Colombian literature and conversation, and because they seem to me representative of the type, including and especially as to the nature of the geographies in which they occurred. The categories obey a sense of scale that might best be understood according to the point/line/polygon habits of current automated cartographic practice, that is, the trigon of visualizing power in which Geographic Information Science is invested. In the descriptions of events available to me, massacres, and *tomas* are expressed as point events, occurring in this or that location. Manhunts and battles more often require some drawing of lines and movements, while the larger military operations (with their multitudes of aggregated events), or the 'civic action' kinds of efforts and programs to control territory are described in relation to some form of space. When faced with the need to describe Colombian violence over a large area and long span of time, thinking in terms of points, lines, and polygons is a valuable mental exercise. Dr. David Spencer, a foremost expert on the Colombian conflict, described the Colombian Army's approach to the war as having "three lines

of strategic action: active area control, sustained offensive operations, and special operations." (Spencer 2010, p. 69) Those who envisioned and implemented GIS attacked the problem of organizing knowledge for ease of analysis and depiction, responding to the conditions of life and language as we see and hear them, and I believe this is born out in a comprehensive look at Colombia's internal warfare. Violent events in Colombia happened at some point on the ground, or a 'point in time'; or they happened along that river or ridge, or 'over time'; or they happened throughout that county, or during that period.

> "In February of 2012 a campaign named Sword of Honor began implementation, which was designed according to a new war plan with the goal of hitting and dismembering the FARC and the ELN on three levels: Command and control (leaders), armed structures, and support networks." (LaTarde.com, 2013) (my translation).



Selection of Reference Points for the Colombian War

Figure 63: Location of some events discussed below in Massacres, Tomas, and Battles. (using ArcGIS with base data from SIGOT 2013).

Massacres

Colombia laments a long tradition of massacres, many with political undertones. In 1928, the nascent Socialist Revolutionary Party organized a large workers strike against the United Fruit Company at its Colombian Plantations at Ciénaga Grande near the Atlantic Coast town of Santa Marta. A local command of the Colombian Army broke up the strike by firing into the crowd. The number of victims has become one of the adjustable elements in Colombian political narratives. The strike was a failure, causing a loss of pay and a schism among the organizers. That schism birthed the Communist Party of Colombia, however. The massacre at Ciénaga Grande is the grandfather of twentieth century Colombian massacres -- a failure for the banana workers became, nevertheless, propagandistic gold for the radical left.

Most of the massacres selected for exposition in this section were not perpetrated using planted explosive devices (Nogal being the notable exception), although there have been many killings using explosive artifacts. None of the massacres described below involved contact between an anti-government armed group and a unit of the government armed forces. Plenty of those occurred, but I would more than likely have placed them in the 'battles' category. The massacres chosen highlight an environment of violent habit and context that allows an odd array of excesses, each with its own character. The reasons for massacres include control of territory, paranoia, or revenge. Guerrillas and paramilitaries often perpetrated a massacre to enforce preservation of anonymity and silence regarding illegal and materially profitable activity. Some massacres were retributional, but still closely associated with a need on the part of the illegal groups to preserve anonymity. With *tomas*, rapes, and selected murders, massacres are the mainstay of violent *presencia* (presence) efforts to delineate domination and submission.

> "Massacres are spaces of interaction where the armed actors do *presencia* in order to deploy their real and symbolic logic as a form of exercising, reiterating and

> disputing power. In the same sense, they are a symbolic venue of the violence to the degree they are full of meanings, symbolisms, and messages given by the actors for themselves and for others." (González et al. 2002, p. 72) (my translation).

Massaces appear to have changed the direction of Colombian public psychology, marked changes in the fortunes of the contending groups, and exposed internal divisions or loss of leadership either in the government armed forces or inside the non- or anti-government armed groups. Sometimes the massacres appear to have been just horrible mistakes or the work of the criminally insane. (Cuesta, José 2002) Colombians consider some of the massacres to have been turning points in the war. Some massacres appear to support the hypothesis that the most dangerous places in Colombia are 'geographies of impunity' wherein or through which fugitives find sanctuary. Other massacres do not appear to support that hypothesis.

There exist various working definitions of the word massacre (or its cognates -- *masacre*, in Colombian Spanish, for instance). Those definitions have an effect on statistics and stories. One recognized measure of a massacre in Colombia is four persons killed in a single incident (González et al. ibid.), which is a standard used by a number of international organizations. I was told by a Colombian presidential candidate a number of years ago, however, that if fewer than ten persons -- soldiers, policemen, civilians -- were killed in a single incident, the Colombian public would not take notice, inured as it was to news of homicide. (Demarest 1989, p. 143) To earn the label *masacre* in Colombia, an event had to reach some appreciable level of public recognition and impact, which meant at least ten dead victims. All the massacres highlighted in this section take their name from the place in which they occurred. That fact by itself is revealing. The massacres rarely are named after the people killed or the people doing the

killing. There exists a palpable Colombian sense that where the event happened runs to the cause of why it happened. Another word, *atrocity*, perhaps spans both massacres and genocides, but that word seems to have gained no legal or mathematical definition, as have the other two. I do not believe any recent events in Colombia merit consideration as genocidal. The notorious Colombian cases offered below, out of many dozens, highlight some divergence in the identity of perpetrators and victims of massacres in Colombia, and yet most share a geographical commonality – one that a consideration of risk distances exposes. Significantly, some massacres are not surrounded by the geographic phenomena that build an advantageous differential in risk distances during a pursuit by an armed group after another. This absence may accompany another – the event is not one in which one force is trying to get away from another. It is not a flight to sanctuary. In some other cases where escape-geography is absent, the fugitives do not get away.

Tacueyó

During a take-over of the town of Tacueyó, in Cauca Department, it appears that a few pro-government individuals may have attempted to infiltrate the dissident 'Ricardo Franco' guerrillas. At the time, the Ricardo Franco column was already greatly at odds with other members of the CGSB (*Coordinadora Guerrillera Simon Bolivar,* Simon Bolivar Guerrilla Coordinator). It seems José Fedor, alias Javier Delgado, had run off with some money belonging to the FARC secretariat in order to form his own group. In any case, at the time, the Ricardo Franco front was in good shape financially. Recruiting was positive, with a number of students and others voluntarily arriving. Fedor, already an unstable if charismatic personality, became increasingly paranoid and upon being informed of the possible infiltration, began weeks of

torture/executions of at least 164 men and women, almost all of whom were sympathetic to the guerrillas and the leftist revolutionary movement. Author José Cuesta (Cuesta 2002) asserts that the event constitutes the beginning of broad public disillusionment with the FARC guerrilla, even though the Ricardo Franco column was clearly a rogue group and treated as such by the FARC Secretariat and the CGSB. The massacre was discovered publicly around December 13, 1985, not long after the unrelated M-19 takeover of the Colombian Supreme Court Building and the natural disaster that buried the town of Armero in Tolima. The coincidence served perhaps to amplify a generalized sense of insecurity. Although it was mostly FARC renegades killing themselves, the Tacueyó massacre is generally marked as an event that took away much of the favorable opinion held perhaps by a majority of Colombians that the FARC was a guerrilla with noble goals.

The town of Tacueyó in Toribío county is a logical target for presence operations, located as it is en-route to and from the high ground of the central cordillera and placed below a junction that is paradigmatic for the shortening of the distance to a pursuer's culminating point. (See figures 61, 62). Perhaps we cannot say that the massacre was caused by the dynamic of pursuit and escape. It is better explained as individual psychosis within a generalized environment of armed conflict and widespread impunity. However, the location of the massacre and the place origins of most of the victims can be ascribed to Tacueyo's paradigmatic escape geography.

La Chinita

In the La Chinita neighborhood of the town of Apartadó, Uraba (figures 63, 75, p. 211), an evening attack during a town celebration on January 23, 1994 left 35 dead, mostly young

men. (*Apartado*, by the way, means remote). The action was a reprisal for failure of commitment, growing out of differences between the Frente Popular, the political party of the EPL guerrilla organization and the Union Patriótica, the political party of the FARC (Aranguren 2001, p. 21) (Museo Casa de la Memoria 2011). As with other Colombian massacres, La Chinita cannot properly be considered in isolation. FARC had been attempting to wrest power in the zone from the EPL, and attacked demobilized EPL fighters as traitors to the revolution and to arrest increases by the EPL in legitimate political power. According to Carlos Castaño, many EPL fighters joined the AUC.

Chinita was really just the beginning of another round of hyper violence, during a year seeing several massacres in the same area (*El Tiempo* 1995). On August 12 that year, AUC guerrillas killed seventeen persons in Bosque de Chigorodó County at a discotheque called the Aracatazo. It was followed quickly on August 19 by a mass killing perpetrated by the FARC in Churio Pueblo also in Apartadó County. On August 29 the FARC killed another sixteen in Zungo Corregimiento in neighboring Carepa County (Semana May 2004), then murdered six more in Pueblo Galleta on September 6, and so it went. Apartadó is located along a smuggling corridor and not far from the upslopes leading from the Panamanian border to the Paramillo high ground to the east. However, this case, like the Jamundí and Bojayá massacres, was not one in which one group was fleeing and another group chasing. The victims were not engaged by their initiative. They did not have a chance to confound the decision-making of their pursuers by the use of landmines or to otherwise increase the risk distances of the pursuers. This, like all the massacres included in this section, are milestones of the war that expose a variety of criminal motivations and organization schisms. The risk distance theory does not suggest a cause of

violence. The purposeful conditioning of a pursuer's risk distances does not cause massacres, nor does it delimit the places wherein mass violence might ocurr.

Trujillo

Trujillo is a county north of Cali in Valle del Cauca Department. (Figure 66). Trujillo is also the name given to what is really a series of massacres in about the same place. I have been told that of all the named massacres, Trujillo is perhaps that event and place which best serves as emblem of the country's incivility -- Trujillo as the microcosm of Colombian violence and almost synonymous with Colombian massacre. Various armed actors killed well over three hundred persons near Trujillo. Most efficient were members of the AUC and the Cali drug cartel, who dumped many body parts into the Cauca River. Almost all of the victims were activists of one kind or another, often accused by the perpetrators of their deaths as supporting the leftist guerrillas. Many collusions and cross-corruptions were involved, and a long local history of partisan political killings preceded the greatest massacre spikes, which occurred between 1990 and 1994. The details form a complex drama that Colombians periodically return to reinvestigate. One of the latest and most thorough investigations is titled *A tragedy that does not cease* (Guisado 2008). Of significance to this dissertation is the following pair of statements from that report:

> "Before analyzing these crossing conflicts, it is necessary to highlight the importance of the county's strategic location, since its closeness to the Canyon of the Garrapatas converts it into a key site for assuring an exit to the Pacific. Trujillo finds itself located in the foothills of the western cordillera, on its eastern slope...And although it forms part of the central Valle sub-region, whose epicenter

> is Tulua, its historic and socio-economic dynamic draws it closer to the counties on the internal slope of the western cordillera." (Ibid., p. 90).
>
> "The drug traffickers intervened in events as retaliation for the kidnappings, extortions and assaults on their property, as well as for the territorial competition related to the control of access to the Canyon of the Garrapatas due to its importance for the drug trade." (Ibid., p. 160).

The theme reflected in the above quotations is recurrent; in the Guisado report, the word Garrapatas is used fourteen times. Notice in Figure 67 that the map displays no landmine phenomena at the southern end of the department where the Garrapatas River flows to the northwest out of the cordillera and out of Valle del Cauca department. Smugglers are going downhill by the time they get to Chocó. They are less likely to travel uphill to the southeast, and few authorities are situated so as to pursue them uphill if they do.

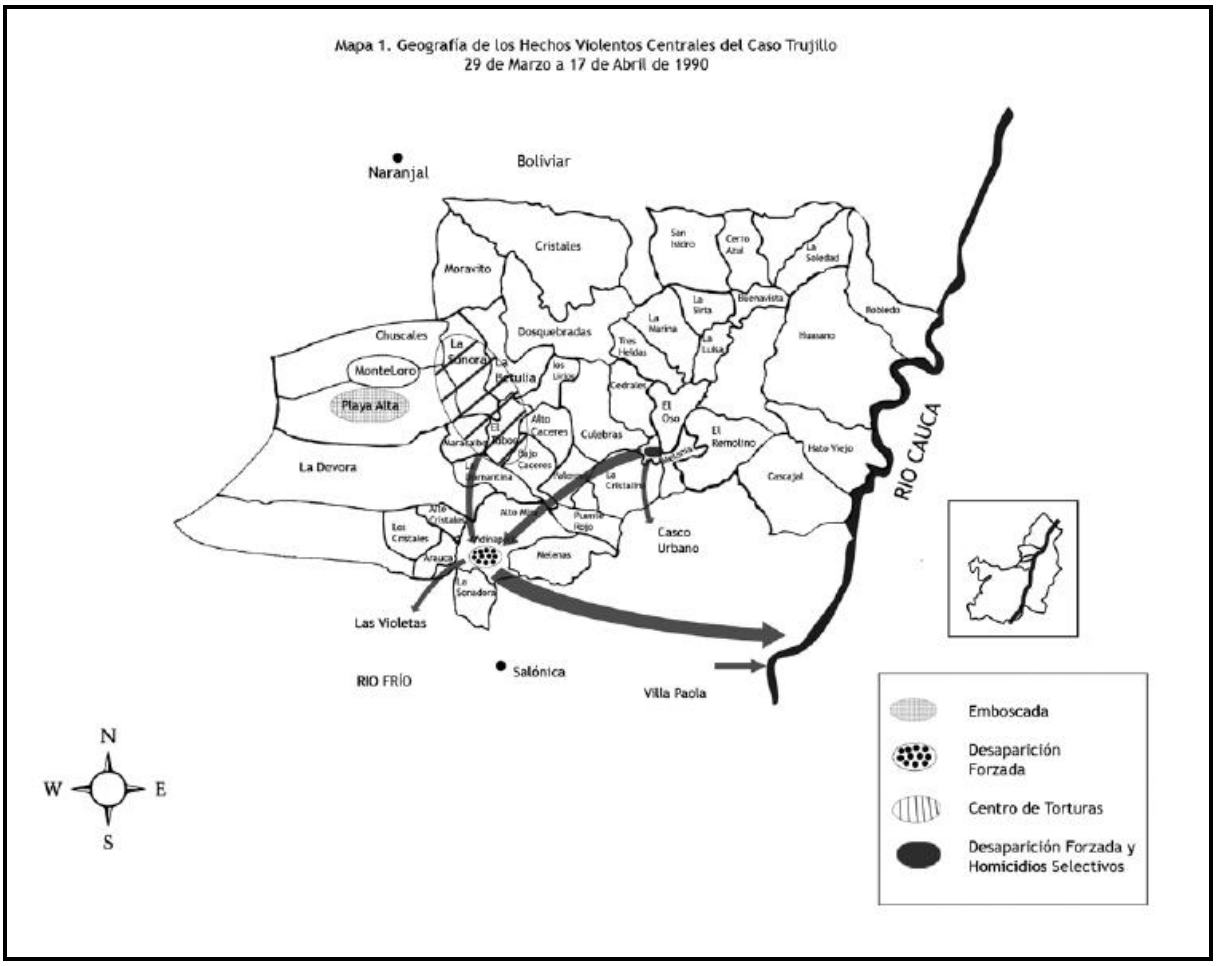


Figure 64: Map of Trujillo area from Historical Memory report. (Guisado 2008) The territories shown are the county's townships (veredas). The legend lists places of ambushes, forced disappearances, torture centers, and forced disappearances and murders. The arrows indicate the main movement of victims. Many of the victims' bodies were dumped in pieces into the Cauca River, shown.

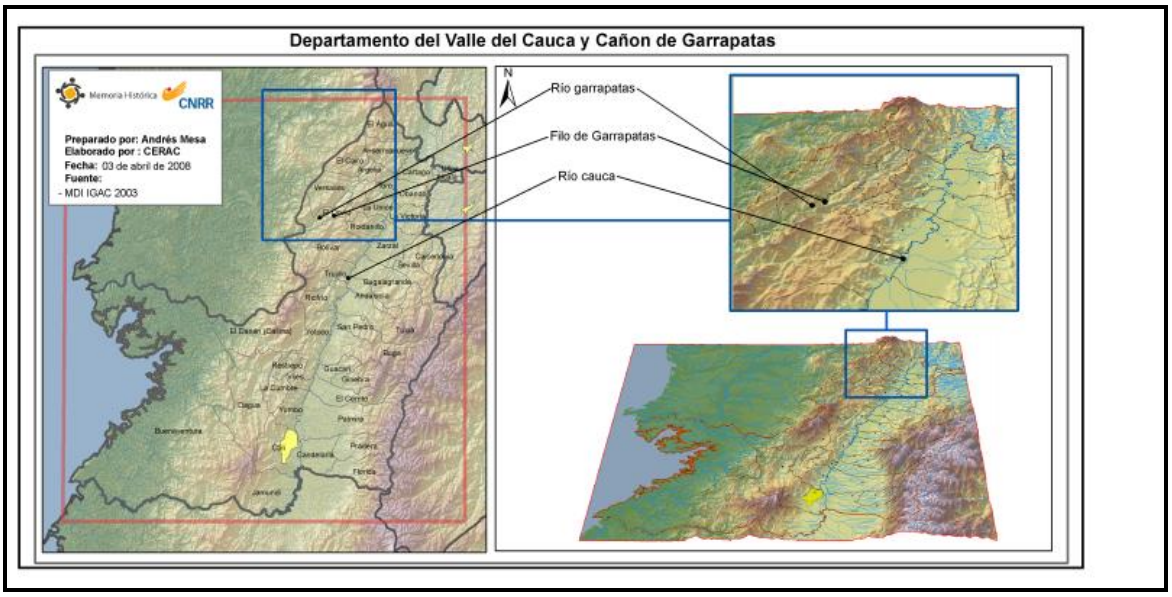


Figure 65: The Garrapatas smuggling area. (CERAC 2008 citing Andres Mesa as preparer) Shown by the arrows are the Garrapatas River, Garrapatas Ridge and the Cauca River.

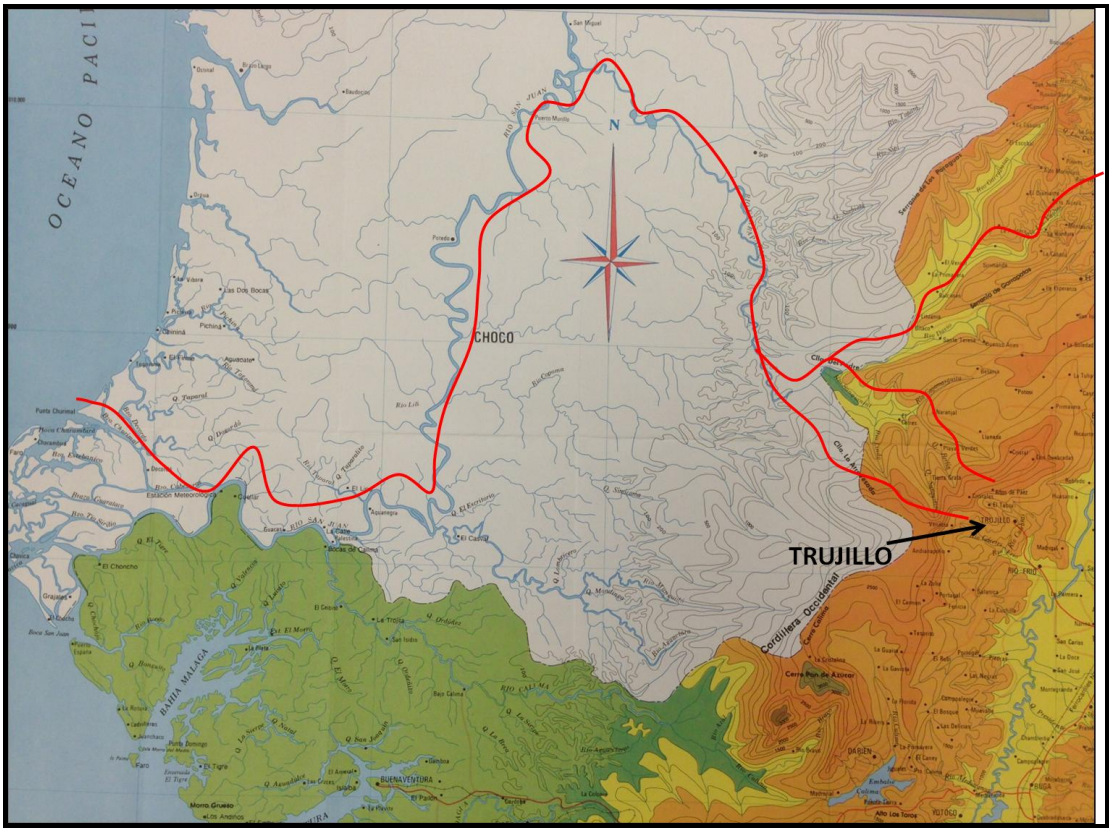


Figure 66: The Garrapatas smuggling area with possible smuggling route in red. (base map Cartur. 2005b) There are no roads to the coast, but Trujillo is nonetheless a transportation hub for contraband.

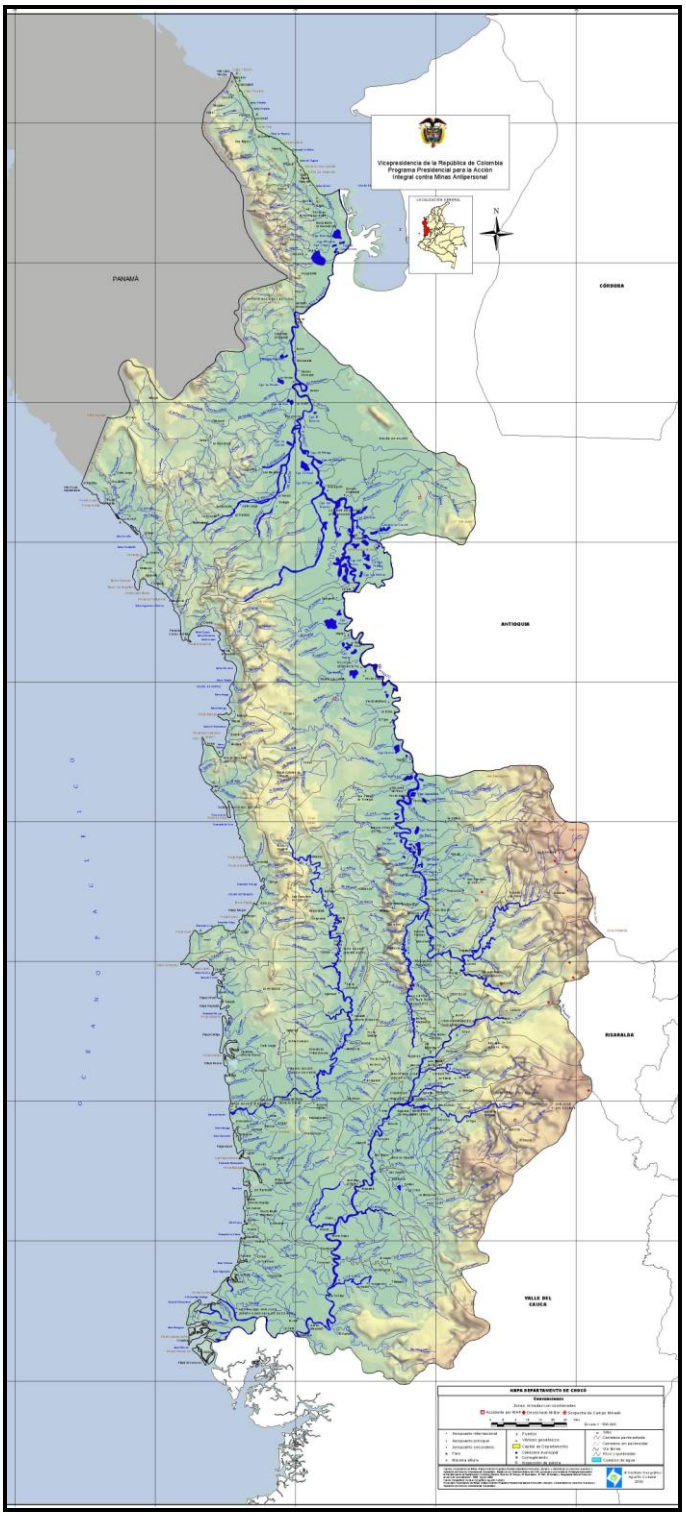


Figure 67: Spatial distribution of landmine phenomena in Chocó Department. (Presidencia de la República 2013). Few landmine incidents were reported on the western slope of the cordillera, suggesting few armed pursuits.

Mapiripán

In July, 1997 a group of anti-communist guerrillas from the AUC, having apparently traveled to the area from Urabá in the northern department of Córdoba, murdered dozens of people in Mapiripán, Meta Department, which is located on the Guaviare River east of San José del Guaviare. Its location is shown on the maps in figures 63, 68 and 69. It has been little more than a secondary marina and refueling point along the river. In 2013 there are claims that a paved road will soon be completed from Las Guacamayas to the northwest. Mapiripán hardly seems as remote a place as Barranco Minas a hundred or so miles further down river and out of reach of any roads, but for a while at least, Barranco Minas was a boomtown. Mapiripán had about fifteen hundred to seventeen hundred inhabitants in 2000, three years after the massacre and apparently has three or four hundred fewer today. (Alcaldía de Mapiripán**,** Meta 2013). Mestizo colonizers began to arrive along that stretch of the Guaviare after WWII. Displacement of some tribal peoples occurred, but those populations were sparse. The colonizing increased as coca cultivation and processing operations induced a labor migration.

The route along the Guaviare was of almost no consequence to licit economic exchanges, but the area was easily adaptable to coca cultivation and smuggling of coca base products using the Guaviare River, most often downriver to the Orinoco and into Venezuela. Along with a need for labor to pick coca leaf and process coca paste came competitors. By the mid-1990s, the FARC was already established further up the Guaviare and its headwaters of the Duda and Guayabero rivers. The FARC was quickly gaining control of more and more coca suitable terrain and found it convenient if not imperative to influence major access points along the Guaviare River. The AUC (the foundational mission of which was to combat the FARC) made some overly simple determinations about severing the FARC's Guaviare line of communication.

Cuting a major FARC line of communication would indeed have been a significant blow to the FARC, but the AUC misjudged the distances involved. That is to say, the AUC attempted to hurt the FARC beyond the AUC units' risk distances. The AUC perpetrated a massacre with the intent to change the overall psychological condition of the isolated community around Mapiripán. Rather than fear FARC reprisals, the community was to fear the AUC. The AUC would impose rules of silence in its favor, extract information about the FARC, and dissuade locals from providing FARC units the logistical support they needed during long movements up and down the Guaviare River.

The AUC, however, did not have enough strength to maintain large enough numbers of foot soldiers in the area, at least not unless the AUC could count on indifference from the Colombian Army units all along its own lines of communication and retreat. The AUC, at least without some level of support from the government, was operating beyond its risk distance.

Many Colombian recountings of the Mapiripán massacre highlight a pair of features. The Colombian Army appears to have had sufficient advance notice an impending massacre that it probably could have moved troops into the town in order to stop the AUC from committing the massacre. Some debate continues about the issue, but in any case, Colombian courts found negligence or failure of duty to protect on the part of the government. Upon that finding a court ordered monetary awards for wrongful death to a number of Mapiripán families. The massacre at Mapiripán in 1997 added to a mood of defeat and perhaps a lowered sense of government legitimacy in the intangible balance between the government and the FARC. At Mapiripán, the victims were part of the pro-FARC population. Within a year or two, the FARC regained dominating presence in the area. Paradoxically, perhaps, some of the murder victims showed up alive in recent years, causing a number of fraud cases to be prosecuted.

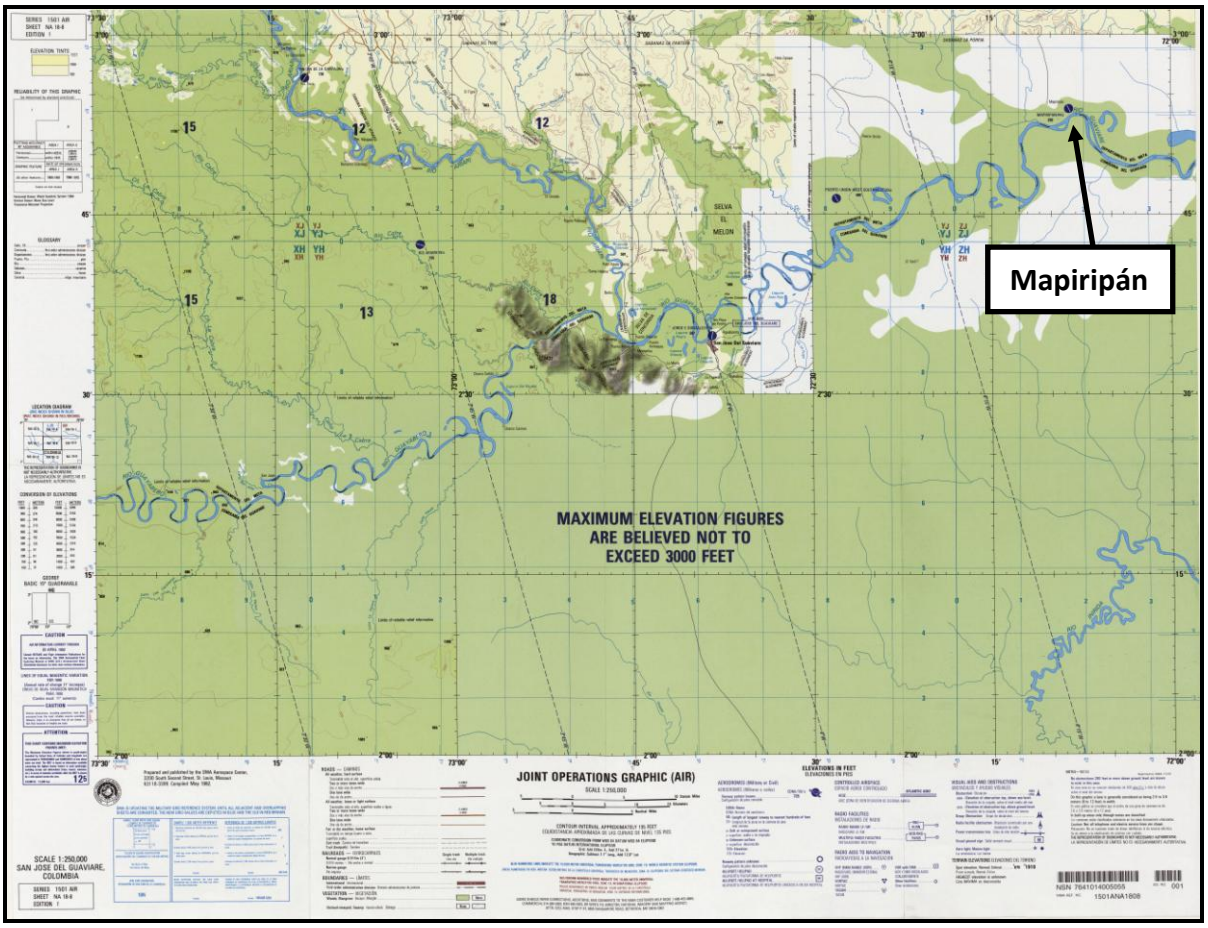


Figure 68: A stretch of the Guaviare River with San José del Guaviare. (Defense Mapping Agency Aerospace Center 1992) Mapiripán is on the north bank of the river, in Meta Department.

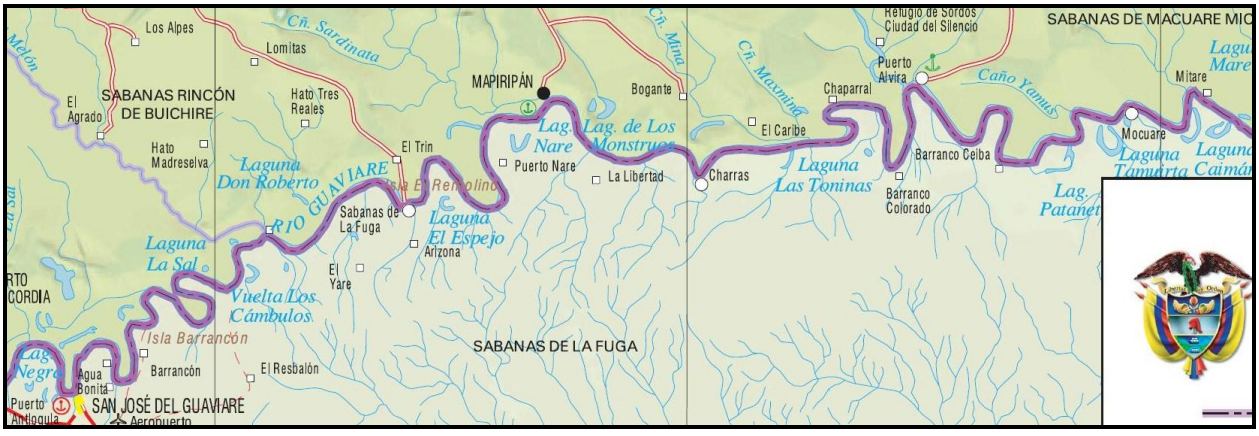


Figure 69: Cropping from the Meta Department map showing Mapiripán. (Instituto Nacional de Geografía, IGAC 2003b). Note that the area to the south of the river is called Sabanas de la Fuga, which translates roughly to the Plains of the Escape. Downriver from Mapiripán is a place called Puerto Alvira north of which is a place called *Refugio de Sordos Ciudad del Silencio*, which translates to Refuge of the Deaf, City of Silence. Quite possibly these names were assigned by smugglers.

Machuca

Machuca is a small town located along the Pocuné River in Segovia County, in eastern Antioquia. Unfortunate about its location is that one of the major oil pipelines passes near the town upriver. On October 18, 1998, the ELN blew up the pipe, spilling thousands of gallons of oil into the river, which caught fire, burned down the town and killed eighty-four people, half of them children. (Grupo de Memoria Histórica 2013, p 101) At first the ELN tried to deflect public outrage onto the police, but eventually admitted the crime, claiming, plausibly, that the killing of the townspeople was unintentional. In 2012 the National Police asserted they had captured the intellectual author of the disaster, an ELN *comandante*. Segovia County has long been the scene of armed violence. A decade earlier the AUC entered the county seat and killed what is still an uncounted number of persons, perhaps into the dozens. Segovia County borders on the counties in southern Bolivar (*Medio Magdalena*, *Serranía de San Lucas*, *Barrancabermeja*) known as a center of guerrilla presence and organized violence, and of coca cultivations. The county is also a center of gold and silver mining, much of it informal. In fact, most recently the FARC and perhaps ELN remnants are shifting from coca toward gold and silver -- taxing and extorting miners and mining concerns. At any rate, the dreadful plight of dozens of families in Machuca owes little to socio-economic conditions there or anywhere, at least not for a while. Their heritage in the area reached back to the successful resistance of escaped slaves and the establishment of the eighteenth century autonomous *palenques*. They were where they were as a direct result of an ancient escape. They settled, however, not in a poor place, but in one that had the wrong combination of economically lucrative targets and terrain suitable for getting away with violent acts.

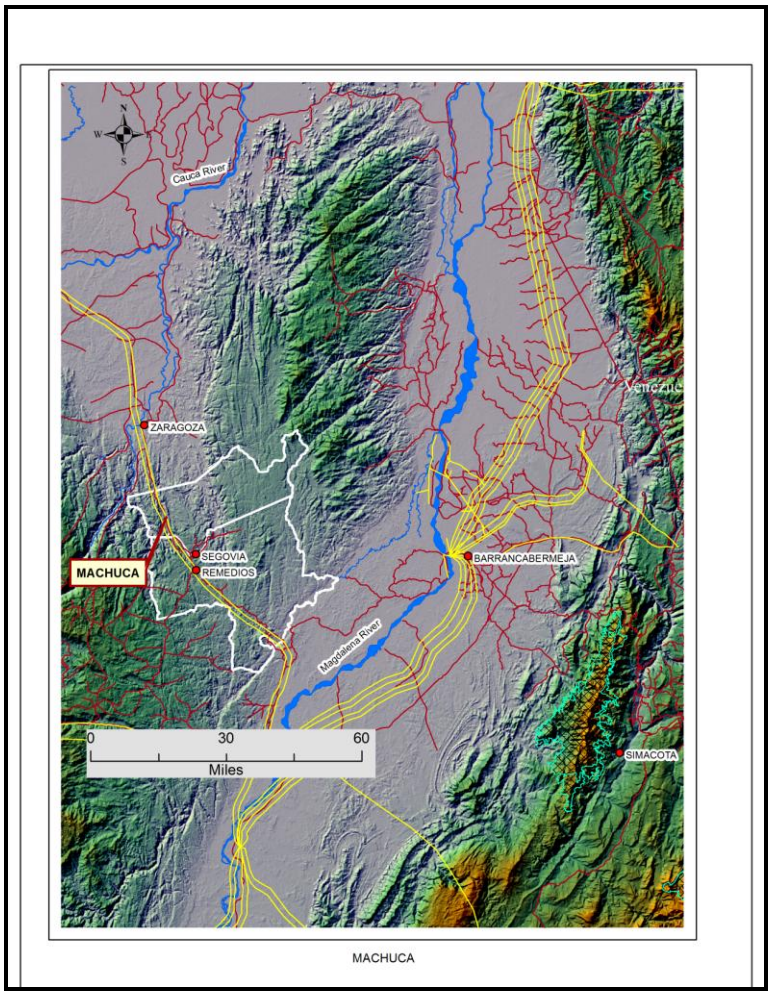


Figure 70: Machuca in Segovia County, Antioquia. Note the road network and the San Lucas Mountains in the upper center of the map. By all accounts, the populace of Machuca was not directly involved in the war, but suffered due to their town's location along a pipeline, within a contraband movement corridor, and close to the bitterly contested Barrancabermeja.

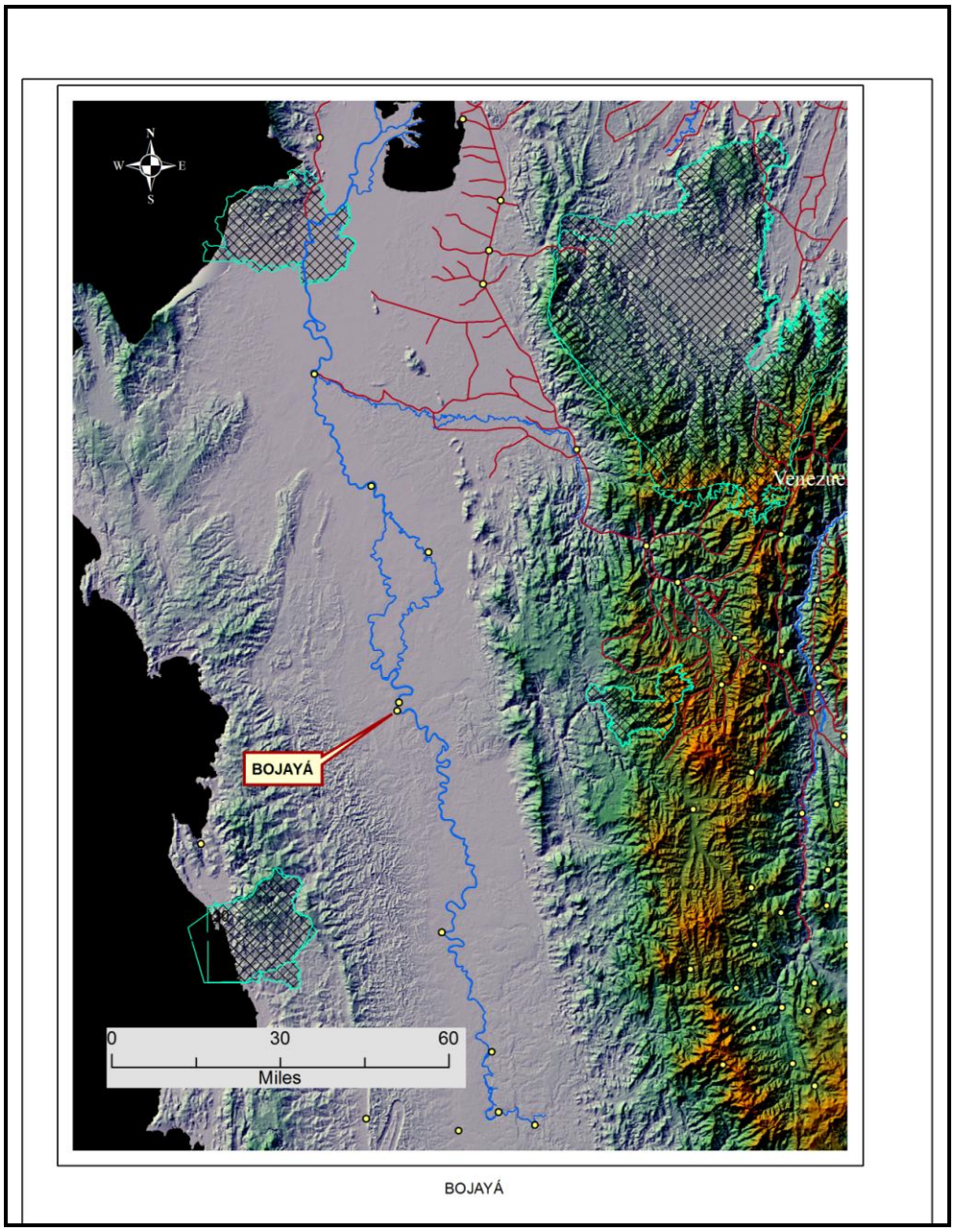


Figure 71: Bojayá in Bojayá County, Chocó Department. The major road network is in red. Bojayá is not located on an upslope or along an escape route to a guerrilla sanctuary. It is located along a major smuggling avenue, the Atraco River, and apparently along lesser east-west paths leading to and from the Pacific coast. It is twins with the Antioquia town of Vagía del Fuerte across the river. Vagía del Fuerte is also a frequently contested town among contraband groups.

Bojayá

The Bojayá massacre of May 2, 2002 occurred in the context of a battle between two contending guerrilla groups, the FARC and the now disbanded AUC (there were many instances in which the government and the AUC colluded, but this was not one of them). In 2002, the FARC launched gas cylinders at a church in which maybe five hundred civilians had taken refuge in fear of an ensuing battle between units of the FARC and units of the AUC. The gas cylinders are a primitive style of artillery, but effective. One of them went through the roof and exploded on the altar, killing around 120 civilians, many of whom were children. The United Nations cited the AUC for using the villagers as a shield and for pillaging), and the FARC was also subjected to international condemnation. In this case, the populace was trapped in the midst of a battle that the participants had announced. The battle might have taken place farther to the east, on the Antioquia side of the Atraco, or perhaps almost anywhere in the near environs. The armed groups had attempted to deceive and out-maneuver each other during the days preceding the engagement. However, the territorial prize was the advantageous spot along smuggling routes where the towns of Bojayá and Vigía del Fuerte are located. As can be seen in Figure 71, the twin towns are hours travel from the next community of any size. As in the case of Mapiripán, some observers felt that the Colombian Army had failed a duty to protect the people of Bojayá. On the strength of that criticism, Bojayá became the object of a variety of government reconstruction efforts. The town, however, remains at an epicenter of contraband movement. We might classify the Bojayá massacre as more of a criminal negligence than an attempt to influence the town psychologically. In any case, what exposed the population to mass killing relates to the physical location of the town and not to any cultural or ethnic attribute nor the town's economic performance.

La Gabarra

La Gabarra is located in the northern part of the Catatumbo area (figures 72, 95,96) along the Catatumbo River that flows to the northeast toward Lake Maracaibo in Venezuela. The town is located in the middle of one of Colombia's most dense coca growing zones. There is a substantial bridge at La Gabarra, located about ten miles from the international border with Venezuela and the bi-national Catatumbo-Bari parks. It sits about fifty miles from the county seat at Tibú. La Gabarra is on a navigable river, has a bridge, and is in an isolated area near an international border in an area highly suitable for growing cocaine coca. La Gabarra has also been the scene of numerous massacres, mostly perpetrated by the AUC or the FARC. In 1999, in one of the most notorious events, the AUC entered town and killed about thirty-five coca pickers who were working directly or indirectly for the FARC. In 2004, the FARC killed almost the same number of pickers, who were working directly or indirectly for the AUC. As in the cases associated with the La Chinita massacres in Apartadó, Antioquia, the Gabarra killings did not occur in the context of escape and pursuit. They did occur, however, in a movement corridor highly valuable for the purpose of escape after predation. The various geographic elements that favor perpetrator are all geographically proximate, but the killings were distinctly motivated.

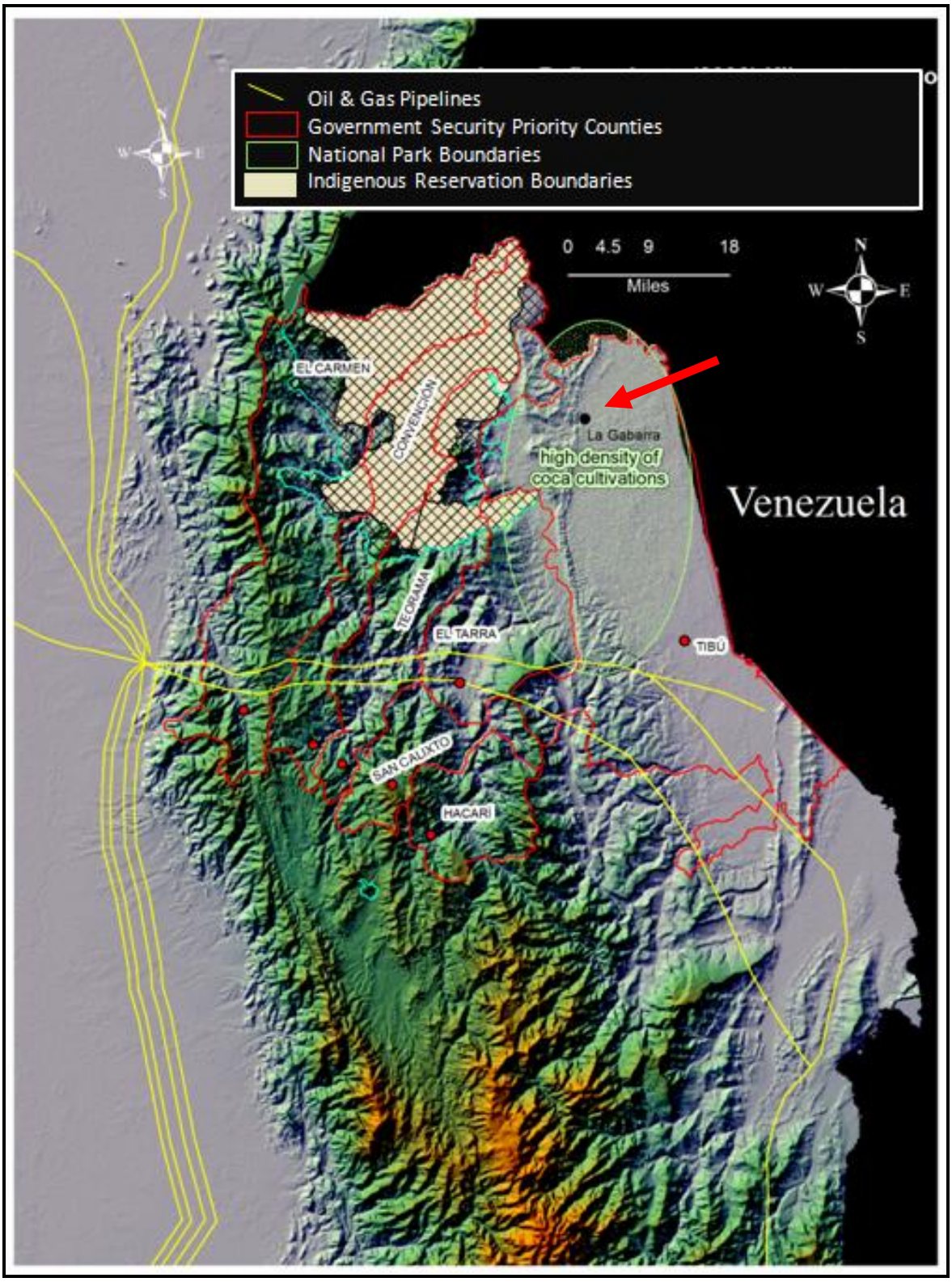


Figure 72: La Gabarra in The Catatumbo, with La Gabarra indicated by the red arrow. See also figures 95, p. 260 and 96, p. 261).

Nogal

The Club Nogal, located along 7th Avenue at about 79th street in Bogotá is one of the most exclusive private clubs in the country. On February 7, 2003, agents of the FARC detonated a huge car bomb in the third-floor parking garage, dropping part of the eleven story building, killing thirty-six persons and wounding about two hundred more. It was Colombia's single worst bombing attack. Although the government immediately accused the FARC, the FARC initially denied responsibility, perhaps because the efficiency of the device and the public outcry in reaction to the killing made the FARC leaders shrink from taking credit. A variety of intelligence discoveries and especially the capture of the FARC computer files that came with the killing of Victor Suarez in 2010 put to rest any doubts the government might have had about FARC responsibility for the act. (*El Tiempo*, 2013) One of the club's squash instructors, who had secretly been a sympathizer then collaborator with the FARC, brought the bomb into the club's indoor parking garage. His anonymity allowed him into what the FARC leaders saw as an inner sanctuary of the Colombian elite. The bomb may very well have detonated sooner than expected, or at least ahead of when the squash instructor expected. He and his uncle were killed by the explosion. Apparently, a third individual remotely detonated the device. A FARC commander known as 'Paisa' (*paisa* is a positive nickname for someone from the region of greater-Antioquia) was later arrested for the crime. He was born, by the way, in Remedios, Antioquia, one of the recurrent place names in Colombia's internal conflicts. (Mackenzie, 536).

The geography of pursuit and escape to physical sanctuaries is not a one-sided equation in which an insurgent or criminal force is in every instance the fugitive. In this case, the FARC leadership found a way to reach into a physical sanctuary of its enemy. The details of perpetrator anonymity and victim complacency notwithstanding, the action's intellectual authors thought of

the action as a way to strike at government leaders in a government leader's sanctuary. The FARC came upon a way to obviate what was seemingly an extremely short risk distance for a pursuer. The immediate perpetrators did not survive their otherwise effective pursuit. They, like many of the suicide bombers preferred by leaders in other longitudes, were expendible. At least one of the intellectual authors of the attack (who has been convicted and sentenced by the Colombian courts) is in 2013 a FARC negotiator in peace talks in Havana. (*El Tiempo* 2013).

Jamundí

On May 6, 2006, a unit of the Colombian Army, on orders from a Cali Cartel drug lord, ambushed and killed all the members of an elite Colombian counternarcotics police unit that had been trained in good part by the United States. In Colombia, both the national police and the army belong to the Ministry of Defense. Following the murder, the shock wave of questions, investigations, inter-institutional accusations, self-doubt and slumped morale was palpable. The treasonous action related only tangentially to the insurgent war, even while its location reflects the influence of the cocaine trade. Jamundí is a suburb of Cali, home turf of one of the two major cocaine cartels, the Cali Cartel. Although often mentioned as a milestone event in Colombia's organized violence, the killing at Jamundí did not involve a pursuit. We might torque the theory of risk distance by suggesting that the counternarcotics police stepped beyond their risk distance in not knowing they were about to enter an ambush. Such an interpretation would lead us to conclude that the police had no prudent distance for doing anything at all. More useful to the theory of risk distance is the set of missing geographic phenomena. Jamundí does not set next to an international border nor is it deep in the jungle. It is not a remote or poor town. Jamundí is not situated along a route to a guerrilla sanctuary. The county of Jamundí *does* fit the

description of typical smuggling counties in that it hosts a combination of lowland piedmont and highland terrain. It may be that some minor contraband routes run through the county to and from the pacific coast. The event, in any case, is not inconsistent with the theory of risk distance. The victims were not practiced fugitives (not fugitives at all), and had not calculated any costs of their being themselves pursued by a government force. Meanwhile, the geography surrounding the event is relatively unsuited to escape. The event supports the theory in the negative.

Tomas (Occupations)

Tomas and massacres often serve the same psychological purposes, and in practice they overlap as to the scale of their mortality. Many massacres in Colombia are followed by a forensic effort. Some of those efforts are better than others, and they have been getting better over time. That has meant a growing body of evidence that can be made available not only for criminal prosecutions, but for civil litigation. *Tomas*, too, are subject to increasing legal scrutiny, but the *tomas* are perhaps the more revealing as to the nature of the war itself. Although similar in symbolic and political logic to the massacre, the reason for the *toma* relates more directly to where the target community is located on the ground.

Simacota

On January 7, 1965 (two months before the FARC's first *toma* in Inzá, Cauca) a group of 35 guerrillas led by Fabio Vásquez and Victor Medina entered Simacota, Santander. (Figure 73) They robbed the agrarian loan bank; set a few prisoners free from the local jail; then collected together a crowd of townspeople in the plaza to announce that they were from the José Antonio Galán Front of the Ejército de Liberación Nacional, ELN (The National Liberation Army) (Valencia 1993, p. 77). The ELN was from its inception cognizant of public imagery. The

front's namesake, José Antonio Galán, for instance, was leader of the historic Comuneros Uprising of 1781, for which role the Spanish executed him. The event took army intelligence by surprise. The demeanor of the Colombian guerrilla had always previously been rural and agrarian. The ELN guerrillas were articulate, urban and educated. They captured the imagination of the Colombian public, seeming, as they might have, to exude a more Cuban or Spanish communist flavor. With the four *repúbliquetas independientes* apparently overwhelmed by the Army, Colombia's urbanites might have felt relieved that the country was not going to regress to the violence of the 50s. Then the ELN appeared, not with the image of the rural bandit, but one much closer to home psychologically. Beyond their urban trappings and the thoughtfulness of their messaging (the area of Santander Department around Simacota was itself reknowned as an historical focal point of insurrection in Colombia), the ELN leaders chose the physical geography of their first *toma* well. They picked a place from which to escape, and had prepared a sanctuary to which they could retreat. The ELN organized and formed its base and sanctuary in San Vicente de Chucurí County, on the other side of the mountain crest.

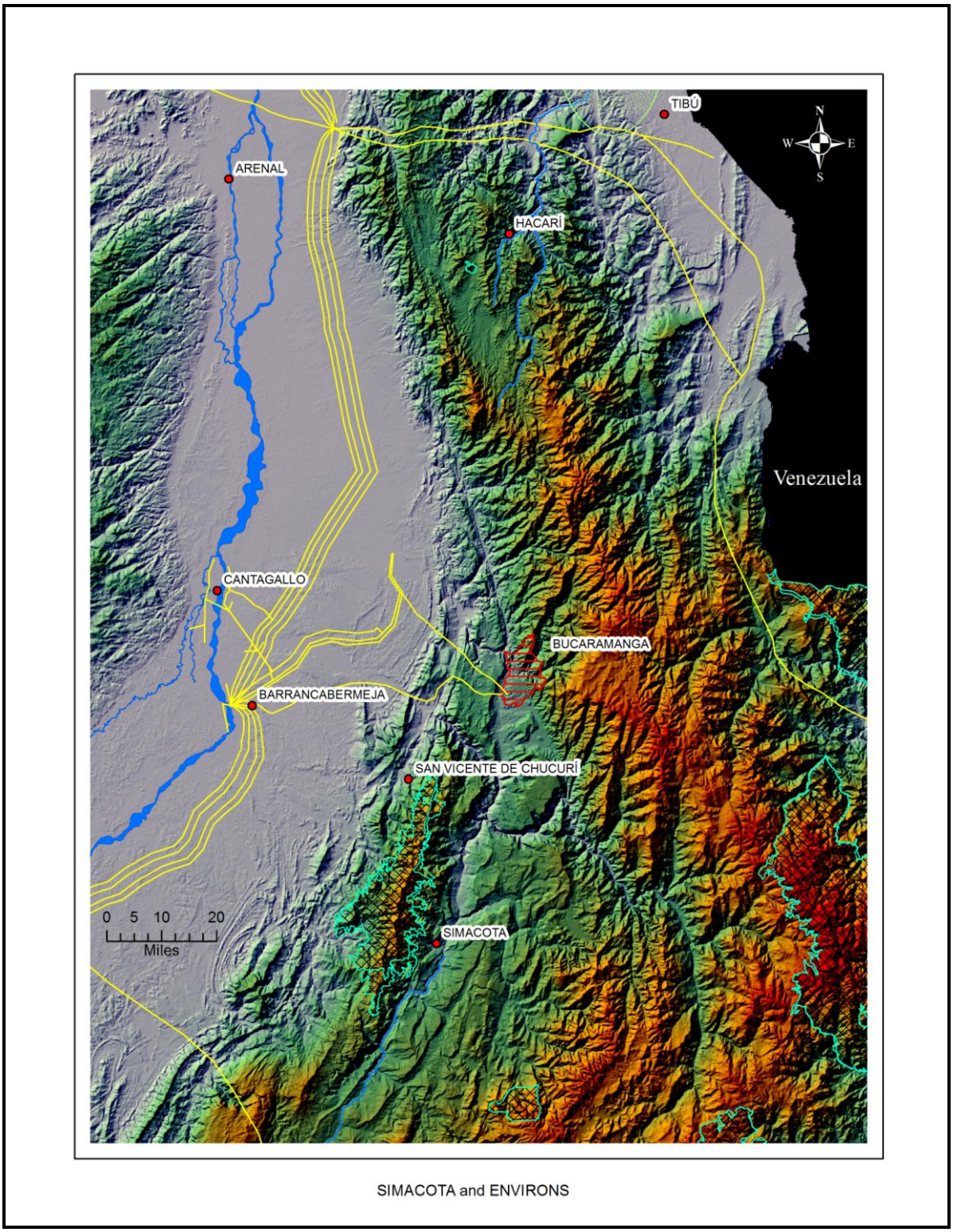


Figure 73: Simacota, Santander and its surroundings. (using ArcGIS with base data from SIGOT 2013).

Inzá

On 17 March, 1965, the recently formed FARC attacked Inzá, Cauca. (figures 8, p. 50; 58, page 169; 63, page 182; and 121, p. 295) It was the first armed presence action of the FARC under the leadership of Pedro Marín. Inzá is today not one of the central government's consolidation priority counties, but is a next-door neighbor. Pedro Marín planned the action in Riochiquito and led the *toma* himself. His intention was partly to show to the public that he and his guerrillas were still alive after the Colombian army's operations to occupy and control Marquetalia, and to prove to the Colombian public the Communist guerrillas had enough power to occupy a relatively important town. (Alape 2013, p. 10-14) Mostly, however, the action was to get money and supplies, since they were low on resources at that time. There were apparently sixty or seventy guerrillas and maybe eighty indigenous campesinos who were mustered along as carriers to help bring back the loot. The raiders killed seventeen people, including two nuns, one of them a Mother-Superior, who had been riding on the bus. A policeman escaped to Belacázar to phone news of the attack to the departmental capital, such was the state of communications at the time. (Bedoya Lima March 2009).

As evident from voting data, Inzá was also one of the few Conservative exceptions in an otherwise Liberal stronghold. This may be of little consequence, but it is at least not out of historical pattern. The FARC early on began consolidating the security of their sanctuaries and routes to and from. The two principal parties held electoral strongholds owing to family traditions and regionalism, but which in any case had demonstrable geographic boundaries. Inzá, judging from election maps, was a relatively conservative county. A study by Pinzón de Lewin depicts considerable geographic continuity in electoral behavior over time, county by county, in

northern Cauca and southern Tolima (Figure 74), even while the study shows that the voting within counties was hardly unanimous. (Pinzón de Lewin 1989).

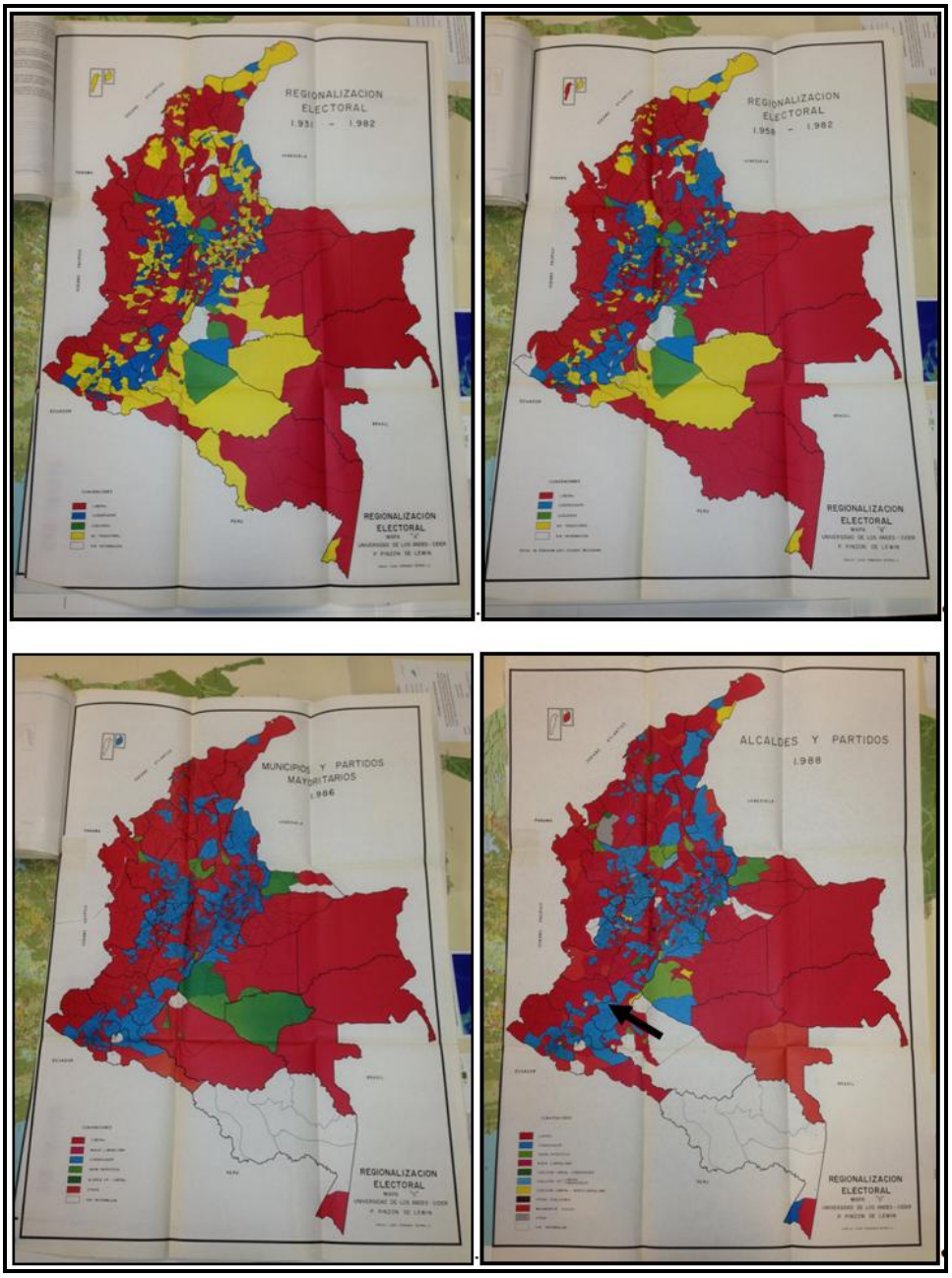


Figure 74: Historic voting patterns from 1930s (upper left) to 1980s (lower right). (Pinzón de Lewin 1989) Red = Liberal; Blue = Conservative; Yellow = non-traditional (local third party); green (and dark green) = leftist. While there have been some durably partisan electoral counties, voting has been heterogeneous. In most counties, party electoral dominance has been achieved by plurality as often as by majority, including in some areas considered electoral 'strongholds.' The coloring is by electoral units, often coincident with *veredas* (townships). The voters in Inzá (shown by the arrow) generally voted Conservative. That partisanship helped make Inzá a FARC target.

The voting pattern maps are reflective of the ancient federalist-antifederalist tension, of durable loyalties to local leaders and durable cultural constraints on changes in political behaviors. Inzá, it appears, was the nearest Conservative community in the effective targeting range from Riochiquito of Marín's guerrillas. It would be hard to believe that Inzá's Conservative legacy did not play into the targeting decision Pedro Marín and the other proto-FARC leaders took regarding what town to take. Partisan throwbacks influencing proto-FARC behavior were, at least early in its development, as influential as class warfare arguments. It would be decades before the FARC leaders could target anything like the posh Nogal Club in Bogotá. They started with the same targets that the old Liberal party guerrillas would likely have identified. Inzá was not just any Conservative county seat, however. It was a conservative salient in a traditionally Liberal area. There were plenty of nearby counties in Huila Department, but perhaps they were too conservative. Inzá had shown signs of wavering in the past, having opted at times for non-traditional candidates. Of course, Inzá was also in walking distance. After all, any description of Colombia as compartmentalized, accidented or fractured will at least in part be a reference to transportation difficulties within the country, and therefore a reference to distance. Whatever Pedro Marín and his nascent guerrilla band did, they had to get back home.

The FARC is a rural insurgency. It was born in the remote, Liberal areas of southern Tolima and northern Cauca. In Colombia, rural means walking, riding a mule, or if lucky, riding a *misto*. Dilettantes or urbanites with soft feet could not have achieved the march from Riochiquito to Inzá and back. Still, the first thing they attacked was a bus, a *misto*, because they preferred to ride. Therein lies a central historical fact about guerrillas. Mao did not want to be a guerrilla; he wanted to move toward conventional war, command a huge army and take over all of China. Likewise, the FARC leaders wanted to take urban Colombia. The vision was to go

from a *toma* of Inzá to a permanent occupation of Bogotá. Unlike the Chinese People's Liberation Army, however, total victory would never happen for the FARC. It was born as a rural guerrilla and every event in its origins was of rural experience, rural capability, rural limitation and rural ride. Inzá was in walking distance.

Pica Pica

In January 1970 the EPL, a lesser communist guerrilla group, took the town of Pica Pica in Cordoba Department. (De la Pedraja 2012, p. 207) Pica Pica is located uphill from Montelibano along the San Jorge River north of the Paramillo national park area. (Figure 75) The EPL had gone through a difficult period. A few years earlier, the EPL had successfully perpetrated what amounted to its "coming out" *toma* in the town of Uré, which is located uphill from Montelibano along the Uré River. In that *toma*, the EPL killed a policeman and a pair of unloved *hacendados* (landowners). That *toma* did not have nearly the media response that the ELN's occupation of Simacota had had in January of 1965. Uré is only thirty kilometers off a paved highway and at least had a poor road going through it. Pica Pica, as a map reader might suspect, probably has its frivolous name for a reason. It is a name given to small birds, insects, dance moves and soccer touch plays. Pica Pica the place is almost as remote as a town can be in Colombia and still appear on any map. The EPL method was an unpolished interpretational form of Maoism, meaning that the organization did not spend as much energy on gaining weapons or operational planning as it did on proselytizing among the population. Its leaders were aware of the Maoist maxims that warned against ever making a guerrilla attack unless victory (meaning escape alive) was assured. Pica Pica was remote compared to Uré and can be classed as that level of urban target (for announcing dominating presence and revolutionary vitality) below

which there are no more levels. Remote by almost every standard, it seemed to the EPL leaders a good place to prove they existed at a time when neither morale nor capacity were high. They tried to take the police station in Pica Pica, but it was a sturdy structure, and the eight policemen resolute. The EPL ran out of bullets and did not have enough gasoline for Molotov cocktails -- an obsolete technology that the EPL had not yet mastered. They had to leave. Of any nation in the world, Colombians have evolved a sensitive public taste for what constitutes effective expression of revolutionary potency, as well as guerrilla competency in planning for the almost inevitable need to escape. At Uré, the EPL had announced in fine print that they had arrived on the national stage. At Pica Pica, they stated in bold type that the fine print of the Uré statement might have used too much ink.

The EPL had understood the advantages of the northern Paramillo area. It was a remote expanse where they could safely conspire and grow a base of support. They had conflated the '*foquista*' fashion of revolutionary theory (build points of resistance and revolutionary enthusiasm and expand the revolution from there) with Maoist advice to build a mass base. Certainly the Sinú-San Jorge river basins fit both the Maoist and *foquista* requirements to an extent, especially since the San Jorge River flows to the Cauca from the west while the Sinú is independent, flowing to the Caribbean Sea parallel to the Cauca. That is, the zone promised a territorial range that would not immediately confront the territory of its ELN sibling guerrilla to the east. The EPL apparently did a good job of proselytizing and concientizing the masses. Part of the problem is that in the 1960s, 'masses' in the Sinú-San Jorge watersheds did not amount to very many people. Residents descended from generations of *colonos* who pressed into economically remote areas to get away from some sort of difficulty of their own at an earlier time.

The Colombian Army reacted energetically to the early appearance of the EPL, mounting a pair of effective campaigns in the mid-1960s. The *toma* of Pica Pica in 1970, however, was a self-inflicted defeat announcing that the EPL was not a group to be reckoned with. For a decade afterwards, the EPL struggled back into relevance within the overall revolutionary movement, often being a difficult partner within that movement. The EPL would recover in the 1980s, having gained a greater appreciation for the severe consequences of tactical sloppiness, but would never assume a leading role in the community of guerrilla organizations. The EPL would eventually accede to a peace process, and perhaps twenty percent would regroup or join the FARC.

The map in figures 75 and 76 show Pica Pica Nuevo (or New Pica Pica). The old Pica Pica is nearby. Note that along the paved national highway (that runs north from Medellín, Antioquia to Montería, Córdoba), just west of the Cauca River and the river town of Caucasia, is a town called 'La Apartada.' Appropriately, the name means remote or isolated. Further isolated to the west from La Apartada is Montelibano, which is the county seat of the county in which Pica Pica is a remote part. Montelibano County has a long odd shape that curves around, following the course of the San Jorge River. Road communication with Pica Pica is from the north via Campobello. The 2009 departmental map (IGAC 2009) shows a road from Pica Pica up through Nueva Esperanza (New Hope) and down to Puerto Libertador on the San Pedro River.

How the Pica Pica townspeople felt about the Colombian central government or its police, their level of material prosperity, the sustainability of their interaction with their environment, or any measure of their resistance to or solidarity with the established system of economics may have influenced EPL leaders to target Pica Pica. Those factors may have

influenced the reaction of the townspeople to the attempt. It seems, however, that the physical location of Pica Pica, along a possibly useful contraband route and near escape terrain, was a far more important condition to Pica Pica's being the location of guerrilla violence.

Figure 75: Pica Pica, Córdoba. (Black arrow points to Pica Pica) (Oficina para la Coordinación de Asuntos Humanitarios 2006) Note the location of Apartadó, Antioquia to the far west on the map. (Dark red arrow) On the western approach to the Paramillo mountains, Apartadó has been a recurrently suffering community sitting along a contraband corridor.

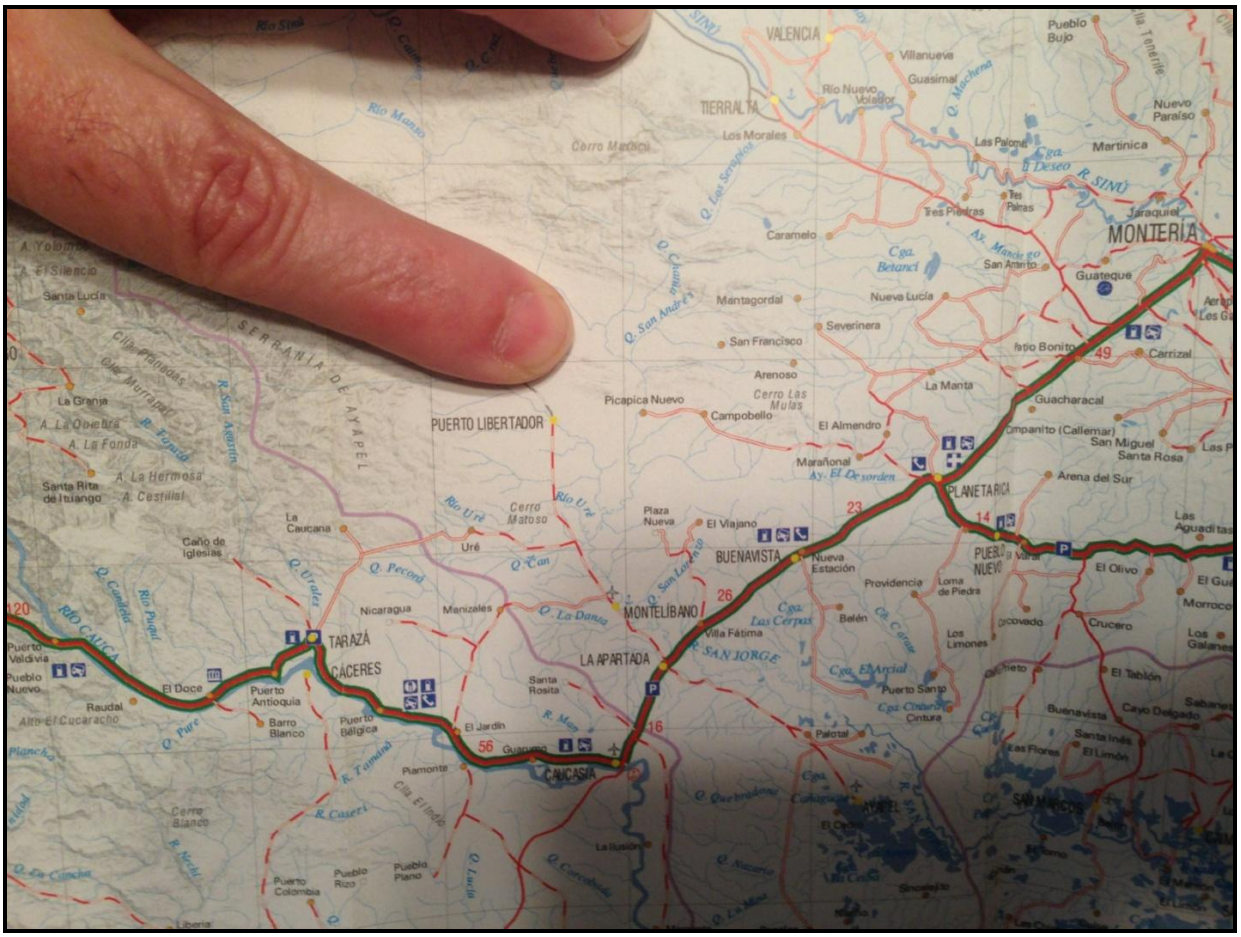


Figure 76: Pica Pica Nuevo on Colombian Road Map. (IGAC 2006) North is to the right of the image.

Yumbo

On August 11, 1984 Carlos Pizzaro Leongómez led a *toma*/mass kidnapping by the M19 in the town of Yumbo that left 21 persons dead. Yumbo is located north of the city of Cali only twenty minutes by good highway. It is in no sense remote from Colombian government military force, being the headquarters of the Army's Third Division and home of an air force training center. Other major military units are within an hour's driving distance. The M19 was successful and popular at least in part because it was flamboyant and audacious. The same characteristics belong among the reasons for its demise. Taking the embassy of the Dominican Republic worked in 1980, but it was a different sort of gamble. After taking the embassy and a

number of diplomats, the M19 was able to negotiate an escape to Cuba, the airplane paid for by the government. Taking Yumbo was the more revealing and consequential action. The guerrillas had to make their escape on the ground, and carry hostages with them to sanctuary from which they might then post their demands for ransom. They did not plan the escape nearly as well as the action itself. They had not prepared for the *run* in hit-and-run.

They chose Yumbo as their objective for understandable reasons. Yumbo was an industrial city with workers who fit the stereotype that would attract an anarcho-syndicalist or communist guerrilla. Many residents of Yumbo chaffed under poor working conditions and suffered from worse environmental stewardship. (Riascos, 2012) Yumbo, however, was not the direct object of the M19's *toma*. The intended audience was the larger, national and perhaps international one. The M19 was not attempting to subdue the population of Yumbo itself, and it is probably for this reason that Yumbo falls outside the geographic target standard for guerrilla tomas -- remote mountainside villages. Yumbo was not chosen as the locus of a presence operation because it itself lay along a needed escape route. Rather, the M19 chose it as a sufficiently sympathetic venue from and with which to communicate to a larger audience. However well or poorly the M19 calculated its greater propaganda, it did not correctly plan physical escape to the mountains. When the trucks had to stop on the way uphill, and the crowd of hostages had to dismount and walk, the pursuers caught up quickly. The hostages were freed, the *toma* fouled, and many of the perpetrators captured. The failed *toma* at Yumbo was a minor contributor to its dissipation compared to the toma of the Supreme Court building the following year. The Yumbo incident was but one of many complicators of an ongoing 'peace process.' The M19, along with the EPL, signed a cease-fire with the government at the end of the same month, but it did not last long. (Villamizar 1997, p. 101).

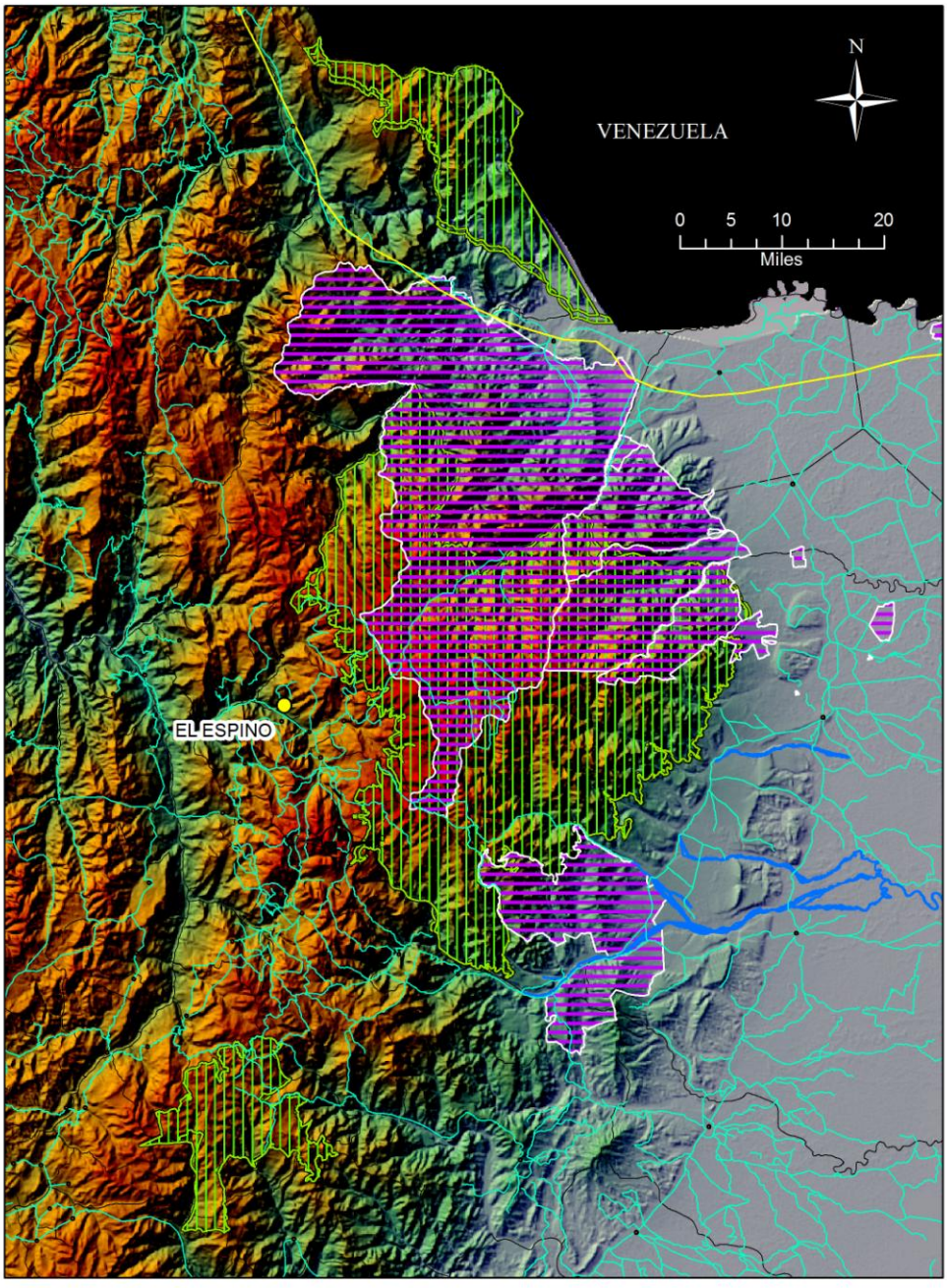
Palacio de Justicia

On November 6, 1985 a unit of the of M19 tried another spectacular *toma*, entering the Colombian Supreme Court building in Bogotá on the federal plaza kitty-corner from the Casa de Nariño (Colombia's White House) and across from the national congress. The M19 had made a peace agreement with the government in mid-1984 (Villamizar 1997, p. 99), but there had been no demand that the M19 surrender its weapons, and the M19 leaders had achieved no consensus within the guerrilla group (or they *had*, but not for peace). Pablo Escobar had grown powerful as a drug lord by that time, and helped fund the operation in order to destroy some bothersome legal files and express displeasure with an extradition law under review by the court.

Still inspired by their success at the Dominican Republic embassy in 1980, the guerrillas expected to negotiate an escape route. According to the plans, a massive demonstration was to form outside the building in the huge central square. The crowd would prevent any effective military response. Unfortunately for the occupiers, a unit of the army arrived almost immediately, before a crowd had formed. It wasted no time retaking the building. In the process, a fire started, or was set. All of the M19 guerrillas were killed, and so were eleven Supreme Court justices. Many at the time saw the event as the death knell of the M19 (Mackenzie 2007, p. 414). The geographic phenomena this research identifies as being favorable to the fugitive (and for that reason correlative with places Colombians most often cite as the foci of the conflict) were not present in this seminal event. The perpetrators did not escape.

El Espino

From about 1989 to 2003, El Espino, Boyacá Department, suffered at least five FARC *tomas*. On June 9, 1999 the FARC destroyed the municipal building, the police station and twenty-two houses around the central plaza. The guerrillas were doing a presence operation, leaving behind a lesson of dominance and silence. (Mendoza, September, 2009) Evident geographic factors contribute to the violence and destruction suffered in this remote rural town. It is located on the slopes leading to and from a large national park and an indigenous reservation near the international border with Venezuela. It is a place near and around which smuggling has probably been commonplace for centuries. Politics, ideology, socio-economic performance, land tenure, race, nor religion explains the suffering of the population of El Espino. It is reasonable, however, to assign El Espino's status as recurrent victim of organized violence to its simple location along a natural smuggling route, combined with the violent competitive purposes of the guerrillas and the paramilitaries. El Espino suffers because it is in a location where a fugitive force can best create and exploit advantages in risk distance relative to its pursuers.



El Espino, Boyacá

Figure 77: El Espino, Boyacá. El Espino sits on the escape slope toward a remote area in which extend a national park and a large indigenous reservation near the Venezuelan border. Green vertical striping is national park. Purple horizontal stiping is indigenous reservation. The road network is in Tourmaline green.

Manhunts

Some of the fiercest fighting in recent years has taken place in the context of enormous manhunts for leaders of the FARC. Some of these unfolded in what can be described in terms of points, lines and spaces (or polygons). Special operations forces were sent to assault high value targets (FARC leaders) when distances, assets and surprise warranted (point operations). Regular units maneuvered to fix, attrite, and flank FARC units deployed to protect its leadership (line operations). In the meantime, the government designated various counties and communities, mostly rural, as consolidation zones wherein long-term developmental and propaganda work was to change the balance of anonymity to dry up FARC support along lines of communication on which their leaders depended for survival (area operations). The government's decapitation strategy toward the FARC had been proving itself, but it had never been imagined as a simple matter of killing the insurgent boss and watching the organization wither away. The FARC had a systematic leader preparation and replacement strategy that had been in place for a long time. The government targeted the FARC leaders because they were, by police reasoning, the authors of the organized violence, and by military reasoning because to put the FARC leaders to flight meant denying them the initiative. Whomever the FARC leader was at a given moment, he was consubstantial with the physical location of the FARC's headquarters, which meant the location of the organization's personnel, contract, and inventory files, as well as keys to the principal communications means. To go after the leaders also meant going into the most significant terrain and after the greatest intelligence treasures. Finally, to kill the FARC leadership seemed the ultimate 'propaganda of the deed' when it came to public perceptions. Killing FARC leaders would place the FARC in a weaker bargaining position in the event of some return to negotiations. In every case, the dynamic included a guerrilla who was absolutely

aware of the nature of the military operations and their purpose, who used the human and physical geography to the extent possible for maintaining impunity. The Colombian army was likewise increasingly experienced in measuring the equation of culminating points, and constantly improved technologically to rebalance that equation. The cover of (now President) Juan Manuel Santos' *Jaque al Terror* (Check on Terror) shows photographic portraits of ten guerrilla leaders, eight of whom had been neutralized by the time of the book's publication in 2009. The book cover depicts the remaining two, Mono Jojoy and Alfonso Cano, in gun sights. Both were killed since *Jaque al Terror*'s publication, and are two of the individuals discussed below. There are dozens of other reported manhunt stories of lesser guerrilla leaders, and in the majority of the cases their demise occurred in one of the named priority zones. Other manhunts, conducted by and among the non-government guerrillas, have gone all but unreported. In these lesser manhunts and in all ten to which the *Jaque al Terror* book cover alludes, Colombia's geography, especially its mountains, jungle rivers and international borders favored the prey. The government overcame that disadvantage by expensive application of technology, increasing numbers of foot soldiers and by creating other ways to extend their own risk distances while closing those of the hunted.

Gustavo Rueda Díaz

Better known by his nom de guerre Martín Caballero, Mr. Rueda was born in Barrancabermeja, Santander in 1962 and died in an isolated part of Carmen de Bolívar County in the Montes de Maria area. When the Colombian Army finally killed him on October 24, 2007, he was commander of the 37th FARC Front, a unit of the Caribbean Block and a senior member

of the FARC's general staff. The location and subsequent penetration of Mr. Rueda's Montes de María hideout is emblematic of the slow deterioration of that area as a geography of impunity.

Luis Devia

Luis Devia was a senior FARC leader who used the *nom de guerre* Raul Reyes. The Colombian Army killed Mr. Devia on March 1, 2008 about one mile inside Ecuador. Born in La Plata, Huila in 1948, Mr. Devia joined the Communist Party in Florencia, Caquetá when he was a sixteen-year-old high schooler, and joined the FARC in Casa Verde, La Uribe County, Meta Department in 1975. (Pérez 2008, p. 58). His father, a shopkeeper, had been a Liberal and member of Eliécer Gaitán's short-lived political party. Mr. Devia kept with him numerous large personnel and logistical files on portable computers and storage devices. The Colombian raid into Ecuador caused an international diplomatic row, but also gained for the Colombian government a trove of intelligence information that was in those electronic files. Mr. Devia had placed confidence in an invisible international border. That border had been sufficient to shorten the risk distance of his pursuers. On that one occasion it did not work.

Pedro Antonio Marín

Also known as Manuel Marulanda and more popularly as Tirofijo (Sureshot), Pedro Marín was one of the FARC's founders and its leader for decades until his death in late March, 2008, which was not publicly reported until May 24, 2008. Mr. Marín was born in Quindío Province, west of Tolima. His admirers liken the flight of the proto-FARC guerrillas led by Mr. Marín to Mao's Long March in China. Mr. Marín's march was in any case considered an epic display of resolve and resourcefulness. During the retreat, Mr. Marín established several

hideouts that would remain hidden for years. The chase to capture him began no later than 1962, after he killed a judge in Planadas, Tolima. Popular belief has it that he died of natural causes, of heart failure. He may have been hounded if not wounded by aerial bombings, and perhaps he was too far from or unable to travel to a hospital where his life might have been prolonged. He was buried secretly, and his remains have not yet been found.

Victor Suárez

Known by his *nom de guerre* Jorge Suárez Briceño, El Mono Jojoyas, or 'Mono Jojoy' (of interest to this research, the nickname is apparently related to an admiration on the part of his troops for his ability to elude his pursuers). Mr. Suárez was a few years younger than Luis Devia was, but also joined the FARC in 1975. His birthplace, like his earliest names, is the subject of some speculation, but apparently he was born in Cabrera, Cundinamarca, another mountainside town notorious as a redoubt of smugglers and guerrillas. The Colombian Army killed Mr. Suárez close to La Uribe, Meta (outside of the Macarena hideout that Mr. Suárez called *El Santuario*) on the 22nd or 23rd of December, 2010. At the time, he was the FARC's military leader.

Guillermo Sáenz

On November 4, 2011, in Popayán, Colombia, orderlies wrapped the corpse of Guillermo Sáenz in plastic after some forensic work to confirm his identify and satisfy the public. Sáenz, who used the *nom de guerre* Alfonso Cano, had been the overall commander of the FARC since late May, 2008, but had spent most of the time evading capture, rarely able to regain his footing or take military initiative. (Bedoya Lima November 2011) On news of his death, Colombian

officials and commentators immediately pronounced the opening of possibilities for another round of peace negotiations with the FARC. The remaining senior FARC leadership would be harder to hunt; most were in foreign lands, probably Venezuela. Killing Sáenz was nevertheless a significant military and political achievement, accomplished at cost. In a celebrity interview (Aranguren Molina, Mauricio, 2001), chief of the anti-communist AUC guerrilla, Carlos Castaño, had been asked in 2001who the most important man in the FARC was. Mr. Castaño replied, "In the irregular world without a doubt Alfonso Cano." Mr. Sáenz' last chase is especially apropos to this research in that the FARC chief, remaining inside Colombia, sought and felt most comfortable in the same territory in remote southern Tolima and northern Cauca in which are found legendary birthplaces of the FARC from four decades earlier. There he was able to escape over two years of energetic pursuit by the Colombian Army. In part because of some personal whims (like chocolate truffles and a companion dog), his location was discovered, and the Euclidean distances closed.

The hunt itself unfolded in and between several national parks (Nevado del Huila, Las Hermosas, Puracé, Munchique, Farrallones de Cali, and Serranía de Los Picachos), but especially in the drainage of Nevado del Huila in the counties around where the departments of Cauca, Tolima, Valle del Cauca, and Huila approach each other. (figures 8, 58, 78and 108). At high elevations, obeying headwaters and isolated mountain passes, the FARC's central military preoccupation became keeping Saenz alive, and in service to that concern, the guerrilla planners counted on making their enemy's pursuit efforts confusing and costly.

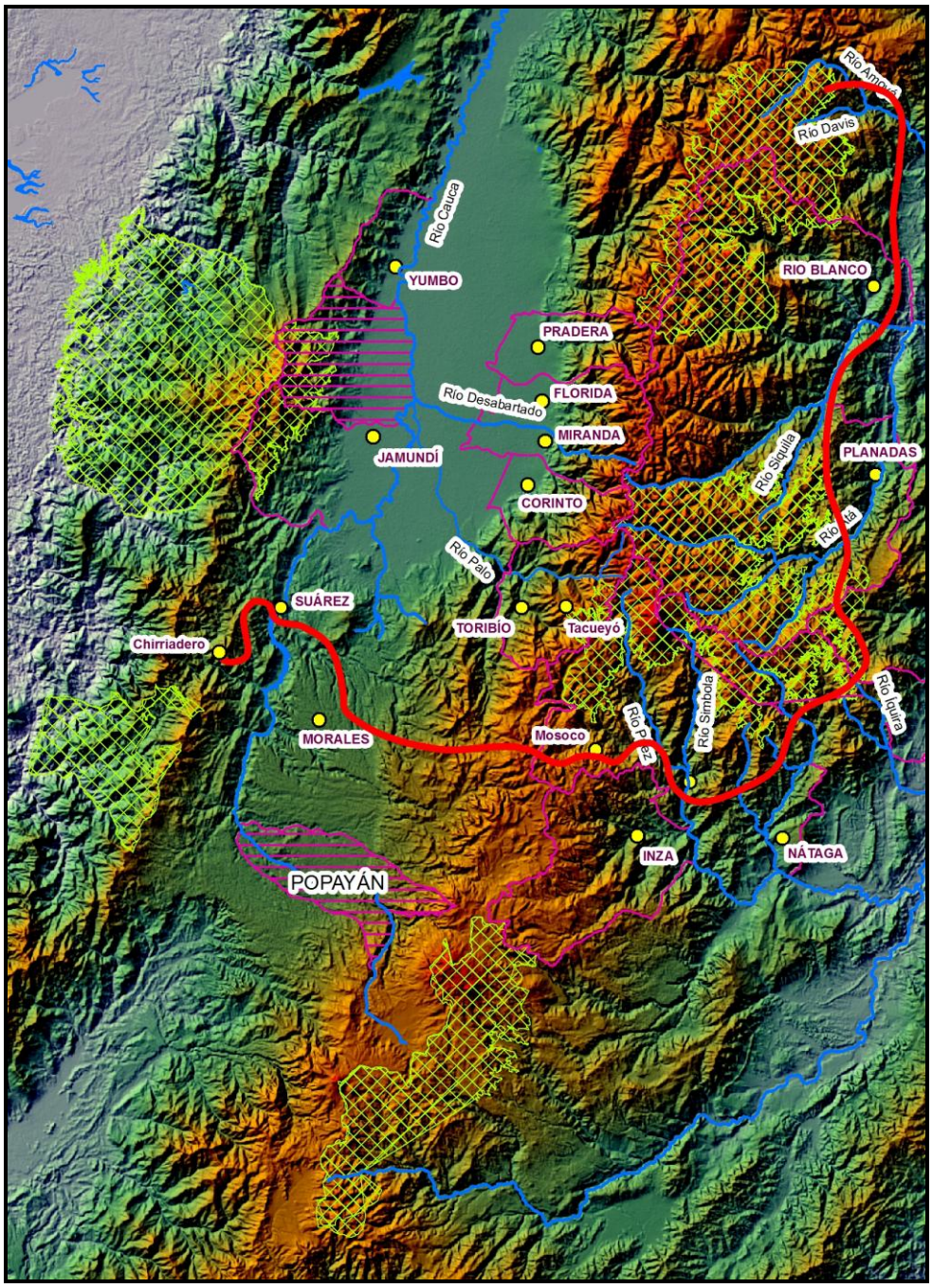


Figure 78: The last escape run (red line) of Guillermo Saenz, adapted from journalist report. (Bedoya Lima November 2011) "El último recorrido" might translate to,"The last trajectory," or perhaps, "The last go-around." Compare this map to those in figures 8 and 58. Sáenz apparently preferred (or defaulted to) the original FARC sanctuary areas. He moved from the Las Hermosas Park area in the north through the Nevado del Huila area in the center. Government forces killed him soon after they flushed him out of them.

Saenz' protective troops were organized in three rings, the innermost composed of about a dozen highly trusted and experienced guerrillas, and the outermost with as many as three to

four hundred. Figure 121 shows twelve counties that make up most of the geographic extent in which Sáenz' final failure to escape took place. The highest point is the volcanic peak Nevado del Huila (17, 600 ft.). The Saldaña River and many of its key tributaries gather on its northeastern slopes and flow in Tolima Department northeast headed for the Magdalena River. The Páez River rises on the southwestern slopes of the volcano then flows south-southeast into the Magdalena in Huila Department. On the other side of the mountain crests just west of Tolima's border, the rivers flow toward the Cauca River in either Cauca or Valle del Cauca departments. Abundant streams, slope, vegetation, altitude, few roads, and few people mark the area as simultaneously remote and a transportation hub -- if one is on the run. Curious but understandable, descriptions of the area made by residents and officials of all political types extol the region as a communications hub from which one can go east to the jungles and plains of Meta and Caquetá, north toward the nation's capital, west to the Pacific port of Buenaventura, or south passing out of the Colombian Massif to Ecuador. Southeast of the Nevado del Huila volcano, we find Páez County, sometimes called Belacázar, the first name taken from a predominant local indigenous identity and the second from a conquistador. Toward the eastern border of the county is the small town of Riochiquito, famous in Colombia as a place according to guerrilla legend where the FARC was named, if not birthed, in the 1960s. At that time, the Colombian army first started chasing Pedro Marín, who had immediately preceded Sáenz as FARC commander. Five decades in, the FARC still counted on the same geography for escape to sanctuary further east. Mr. Sáenz tried to get to Nátaga, in Huila Department, but his route was blocked.

It was never just a matter of the topography. The psychological makeups of the local populations are one with their surroundings. It is said they are predisposed to self-reliance,

distrust of government, and physical durability. The FARC, even after the bulk of its leaders hailed from elsewhere in Colombia, engaged the local cultural predispositions. Ethnicity in the region, while it presumably has some correlation to attitudes of resistance, is a varied and complex matter. There is a considerable black community in Páez, for instance, and township-by township self-identification as indigenous or mestizo seems to vary considerably. The area around Riochiquito, geographic center of FARC lore, has a higher degree of private property land ownership than many of the surrounding zones. How much of that can be ascribed to autochthonous intentions and how much to programs imposed by the central government is a debate, but relationships between the locals and the FARC are spotty at best. According to some who might know, there has existed a changing patchwork of sympathy, enthrallment, fear, indifference, and rejection. The place offers, in short, rough terrain.

The hunt for Sáenz began in earnest in early February, 2008 when the Colombian Army launched a major operation to go dig him out of the Cañon de Las Hemosas area in Tolima Department where informants claimed he was holed-up at over 11,000 feet. Although the Army did not find Sáenz, it did considerable damage to his security rings. By October, intelligence had again fixed his approximate whereabouts to the Barragán Páramo in Roncesvalles County. During 2009, the army's intelligence apparatus slowly improved its networks, but in spite of an otherwise successful bombing of a FARC headquarters camp in October, Sáenz continued to evade successfully. In February and March of 2010, the FARC security rings absorbed additional loses in attacks against encampments in the Las Hermosas area. In early 2011, Sáenz apparently moved toward the headwaters of the Atá River (near Marquetalia), and by late June the trail led back to Páez, Cauca, near the border with Huila Department, northwest of Riochiquito. Around July 3, 2011, the Army almost caught Sáenz in La Honda Township, still in

Páez. In late September, news came that the 6th FARC Front was protecting his movement back toward Planadas County, Tolima. There, the FARC's Jacobo Arenas column was to accompany him back south toward the Pacific coast. The fabric of the protective circles had been badly rent, however, and so the nucleus made a desperate decision to break out of the encirclement and head for the Munchique National Park area east of the Panamerican Highway toward the coast. The fugitives made it to Munchique, but the little hut in which Sáenz briefly lodged was observed from other local dwellings. On November 4, 2011, government special operations and police killed Sáenz near Honduras Township, Morales County, and then transported his corpse to the departmental capital, Popayán.

The fact of shrinking sanctuary doomed Sáenz' use of the central cordillera. In late October, his security rings falling apart, he was hustled out of the bubble toward the Munchique National Park area. Although a likely choice for escape for some of the aforementioned reasons, Munchique is a smaller reserve, and the surrounding population not well prepared psychologically to host a FARC leader. Morales County, for instance, had a Conservative Party voting history. Although it has established smuggling routes to the coast, it was not good sanctuary. The Colombian military literally ran Mr. Sáenz to death.

The overall geography of the FARC has a necessary relationship to life events of a handful of men. As with the other leaders, Sáenz' location, wherever he was, was also the headquarters of the organization. The place where the government killed him was by definition not sanctuary. The FARC's origin myth, as it gains a consensus in historical understanding among Colombians, follows a set of biographic facts of its older members and leaders, Guillermo Sáenz among them. Those biographic facts have a strikingly strong relationship to the geographies of impunity -- where rebels could get away with what they were getting away with.

Battles

Marquetalia

Marquetalia is a township in Planadas County in southern Tolima, but it is unlikely the right placement of the Marquetalia of FARC guerrilla legend, where the early commune of followers of Pedro Marín, Jacobo Arenas and their comrades established themselves in the late 1950's. It is locatable in Planadas County, perhaps in what is now the Corregimiento of Gaitania (named after Eliécer Gaitán, assassinated leftist populist), depicted on the north side of the uppermost reaches of the Atá River valley toward headwaters of the San Miguel River. (Figure 79, 80)Marquetalia has also become the popularized name for a 1964 Colombian Army operation to dislodge Pedro Marín and his band of guerrillas (perhaps 30-40 armed members). The name is for some critics also a synonym for a strategic mistake that started or allowed the continuation of a long internal struggle. On May 17, 1964, the Colombian Army deployed what was a considerable portion of its disposable strength, perhaps as many as 2,500 personnel, to conduct an encirclement and occupation, along with a number of diversionary patrols and movements. Before the operation, the Army also did civic action work in the Riochiquito area of northeastern Cauca, knowing that it was another area of likely guerrilla implant. In any case, the military action was entirely successful in taking Marquetalia and dislodging Pedro Marín's guerrillas. Because it was not able successfully to pursue and capture or kill Marín, it was not effective in ending Marín's guerrilla enterprise or intention. In that light, Marquetalia was not decisive as a counterinsurgent event, and that is the way many Colombians have taken the event historically -- not as a tactical military failure, but perhaps as a strategic one. Some will argue that it was a failure and even a stupidity because it sparked the insurgent war against the communist guerrillas. I think such an argument requires a stretch of logic, if it is not a simple falsehood.

The government had responded to public fear about an outlaw group that for all appearances seemed intent on refueling a bitter internal violence that most of the Colombian public had tasted fully and of which it wanted no more. The Colombian Army's attitude initially was to leave the Communists alone in their isolated places; that they were not a threat to national security; that the society would eventually absorb them and ameliorate their disaffection. (Valencia 1979)

There is little debate, however, since the guerrillas were not caught or beaten, but instead escaped the Army onslaught, that the guerrillas turned Marquetalia into a propagandistic and internal morale-building historical icon. The physical geography of Marquetalia is pertinent here. The place was remote by any standards. For government forces to reach Marquetalia meant a costly movement at the point of which the government's coercive strength would be diminished. The technologies that might have given or preserved government advantage were more limited in their effectiveness by the physical geography than would be the case forty years later. The helicopters' range was greatly restricted by the altitude, and landing places were difficult to find or prepare. The use of aerial bombs was extremely imprecise. The Army's field artillery, while competent, depended on informed and accurate spotting, which it did not have. Although the Army could move troops by truck most of the way, the last several miles could be covered only by foot. The Army was hardly inexperienced in mountain or guerrilla warfare, and knew to prepare deception patrols in order to absorb some ineffectual guerrilla ambushes, but the advantage on which the army ultimately had to depend was in numbers – being able to arrive with more foot soldiers than the fifty or so guerrillas could handle. Pedro Marín knew this well, anticipated events and prepared routes of escape. Put in perspective, Marquetalia (and associated operations against the other '*repúbliquetas*' on the east slope of the central cordillera) forced the

leftist pre-FARC guerrillas to seek better sanctuary east of the eastern cordillera in the Macarena-Guaviare region.

Marquetalia is best considered a place holder or shorthand not for just one place, but for a group of four original guerrilla redoubts -- Marquetalia, Riochiquito, El Pato, and Guayabero -- together sometimes referred to as the '*repúbliquetas independientes*' or little independent republics. (Valencia, 1997, 65) The sobriquet can be sourced etymologically at least back to a political harangue given by a Colombian congressman in 1961. (Valencia, 1997, 68).

> "After the last of the violent bandit organizations from the *Violencia* had been dismantled, the four areas were known of, but the government leadership felt they would be absorbed into society and that it was simply not worth the cost to move on them. Alvaro Gomez Hurtado in September 1961 sensationally labeled the four places *repúbliquetas independientes*." (my translation).

The four little republics were little indeed, and as independent as remote survival experiments might be. They had been in the making for a decade as a spin-off of the sectarian political violence of the 1950s. Any impurity in their communist ideological flavor was partly the result of a schism between groups like Marquetalia (of which Pedro Marín became leader) and remnant Liberal guerrilla groups (from the concluded war of the 50s) with whom a handful of communist leaders had made common cause. The groups and the locations of their refuges became synonymous and grew in the national imagination for a variety of reasons. One reason was a fresh and awful memory of the violence that the country seemed just to have overcome. Another was demagoguery, and the third was actual activities of the communists outside their hideouts. These activities were in part simply parasitical -- to take needed provisions. The groups might have taken on an ideological tone and even vision, but the leadership, including and especially

Pedro Marín, had long experience as pirates. The groups were enthused of Fidel Castro's success, however, and were directly visited, supported and joined by the Communist Party. Violent actions in nearby counties outside their mountain sanctuaries might have had an ideological flavor. When the ELN launched its decidedly ideological coercive presence at Simacota in January 1965, the pre-FARC repúbliquetas felt a new impetus of internal revolutionary competition. In any case, on a 1:600,000 scale map a person can cover with their thumb the locations of all four repúbiquetas. They are all at altitude, at headwaters and ridgelines. They are universally in places that give advantage to the escape, and where, in the context of armed pursuit, a fugitive can, using ambushes, traps, snipers and diversions, radically shorten the risk distances faced by a pursuer. The costs of successful pursuit are often simply not worth the prize. However, in 1964, under orders of a new President responding to public outcry in fear of a new round of internal war, the Colombian Army chased the guerrillas out of all the *repúbliquetas*. Better said: the army chased the *repúbliquetas* out of where they had been. The repúbliquetas escaped. The highlands where they had been taking refuge were remote and therefore expensive for the government forces not only to reach but in which to remain. The government eventually abandoned them. Not long afterward, the now coagulating and self-confident FARC reoccupied and refitted them as transit sanctuaries, with better sanctuaries further to the east. Today, a few of the peasant reservation zones, which many supporters of the current peace process are anxious to solidify, are coincident spatially with the legendary *repúbliquetas*. (Figures 79 and 80).

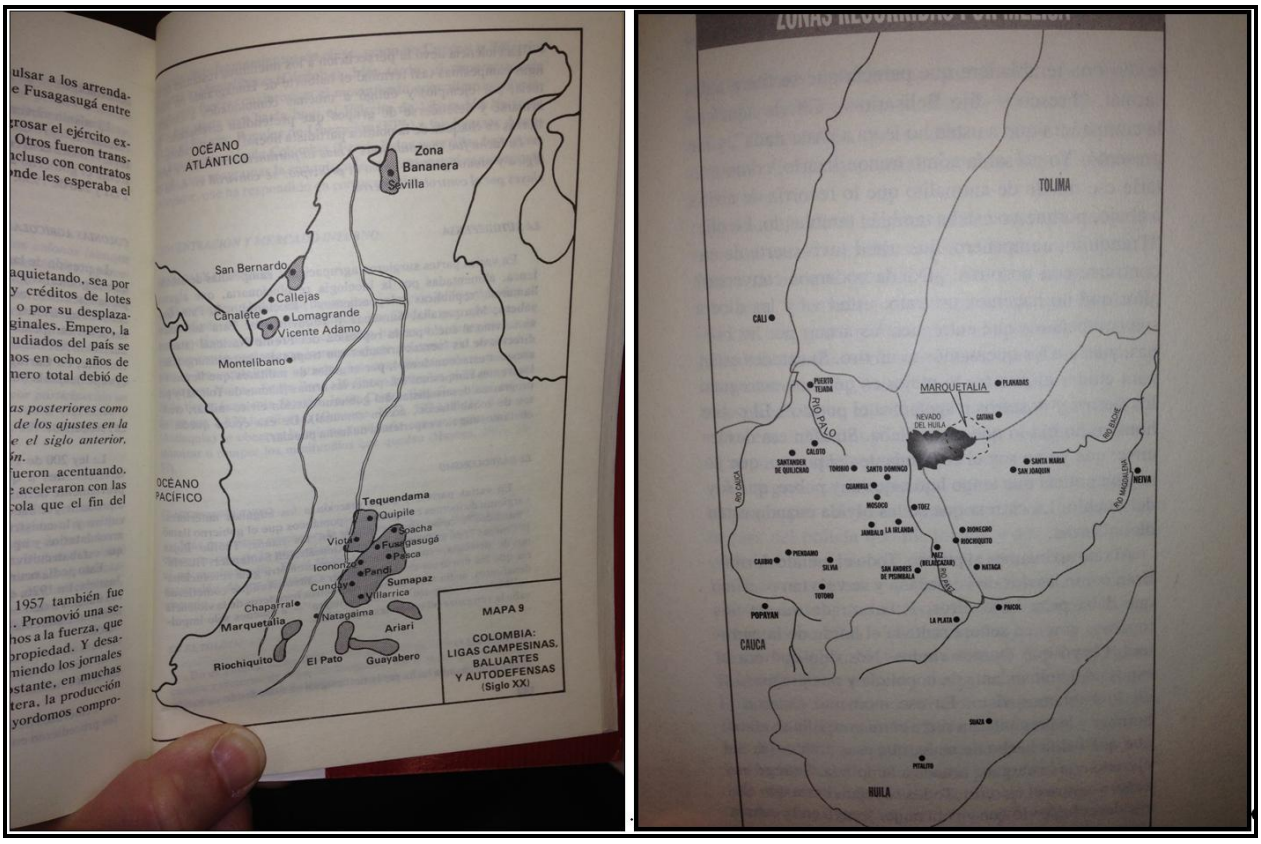


Figure 79: Spatial reminiscences of the location of Marquetalia from two persons who might have been there. (Fals Borda 1982, p. 141; Molano 1999, p. 153) The guerrilla areas shown on the two maps are from the memories of author Fals Borda and from 'Melisa' (the narrator of a chaper in Molano's *Trochas y Fusiles* [Trenches and Rifles]), respectively. Both individuals claim to have been guerrillas of the FARC and to have frequented Marquetalia.

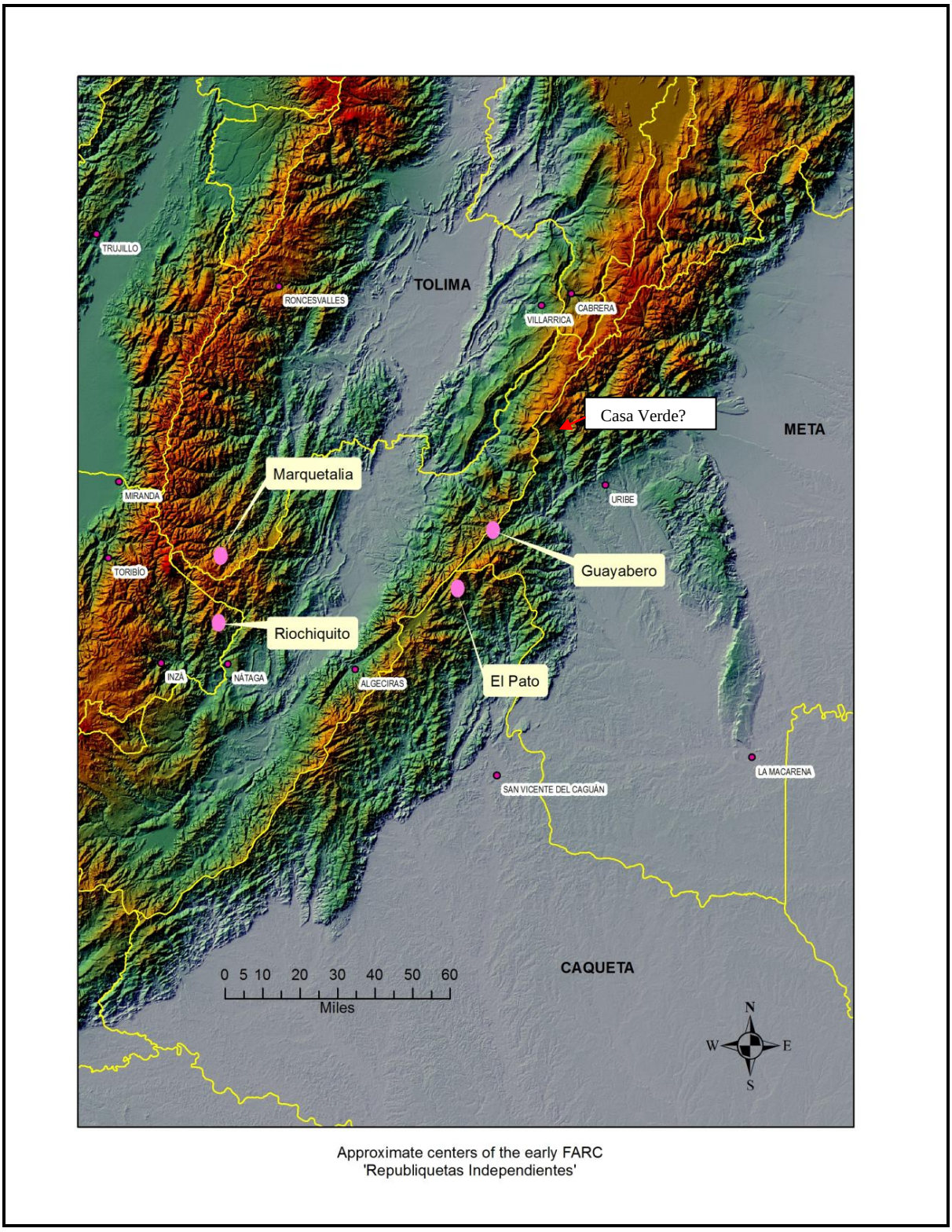


Figure 80: Central Colombia showing the approximate locations of the centers of the repúbliquetas independientes. (SIGOT and various sources).

Casa Verde

On 9 December 1990 the Colombian military launched a coordinated attack on Casa Verde, the well established headquarters of the FARC located in Uribe county in Meta Department (Figure 80) near the upper reaches of the Duda River, which flows south to the Guayabero which flows south and east past the Macarena mountains. The encampment at Uribe had been the popularly recognized capital of the FARC since 1984 when the FARC leaders and then President Belisario Betancur signed a peace agreement called the *Acuerdo de Uribe*. The Army reached its objective against some resistance, and within days destroyed all of the facilities, but without capturing or killing any of the members of the FARC high command or secretariat. Exactly which way they went is still speculation, but, apprised of and attentive to information warning of the attack, and in any case anticipating the attack, given the deteriorated conditions of the peace negotiations, the FARC leaders made a timely escape along prepared routes to sanctuary. The Colombian government had caused little if any damage to the FARC command structure or military capacity. While the Colombian Army claimed a tactical success, having achieved the geographic objective as ordered, the event presented itself to the public as the paradigmatic empty victory against a wary guerrilla. That paradigm is one in which the fugitive plans his escape in advance of the necessity. It begins with the selection and preparation of advantageous geography, advantageous in that it presents short risk distances to pursuers and provides the fugitive with secure escape options. Advantageous geography, in turn, is both physical and human. The former is generally found, while the latter is generally prepared.

Las Delicias

On the night of August 30, 1996, the FARC attacked a Colombian Army outpost at Las Delicias on the Caquetá River. (Figure 81) The attack was careful timed to begin shortly after

the base of three infantry platoons had been relieved, at a moment when part of the unit was receiving supplies from a river launch, and in view of incoming weather that would deny government air support to the base. The FARC had not planned the attack as an harassment nor did it intend to retreat. The base was attacked, overrun, and more than sixty prisoners taken. The FARC sacked the base, leaving only the more than fifty dead soldiers, including the base commander, behind. The Colombian high command was unable even to find out what had happened until well after the FARC began issuing communiqués. Negotiations for the release of the Las Delicias prisoners unfolded partly in public. For instance, in an open letter the mothers of the soldiers captured at Las Delicias asked the FARC and the government to complete the transfer. (Ríos 1998, p. 223) Cartagena del Chairá County was abandoned by the Colombian military and the county openly occupied by the FARC. As agreed in return, on June 14, 1997, with a brief ceremony in the town of Cartagena del Chairá, the FARC released the seventy prisoners it had taken at Las Delicias. Pedro Marín issued a communiqué in which he set the parameters for the next round. He finished a list of aspirations with a territorial condition for the furtherance of peace negotiations -- that the government give up some more counties. (Ríos, Ibid, p. 230). The attack on Las Delicias had worked. The FARC had seized military initiative and could translate it into land.

Defeat of the government garrison at Las Delicias owed to a concert of factors, not just distances. Nevertheless, the simple fact of Euclidean distance from centers of population and from major military bases made Las Delicias a precarious position. Cost distances for supplying the unit and for supporting Las Delicias with reinforcements were great during the best weather. The costs were almost insurmountable during poor weather. For any government units proceeding to the base, the risk distance were short. They could expect ambush. The risk

distances faced by patrols sallying out from the base were also short. For the FARC units in the area, conversely, the risk distances to and from the base were far shorter. The FARC had established clandestine bases nearby, were unlikely to be ambushed by government units enroute to Las Delicias, and had prepared routes of escape in case things did not go well. Most of the bad decisions made by the Army, as well as the correct decisions made by the FARC, can be graded as such in light of how the leaders recognized, measured, and addressed risk distance.

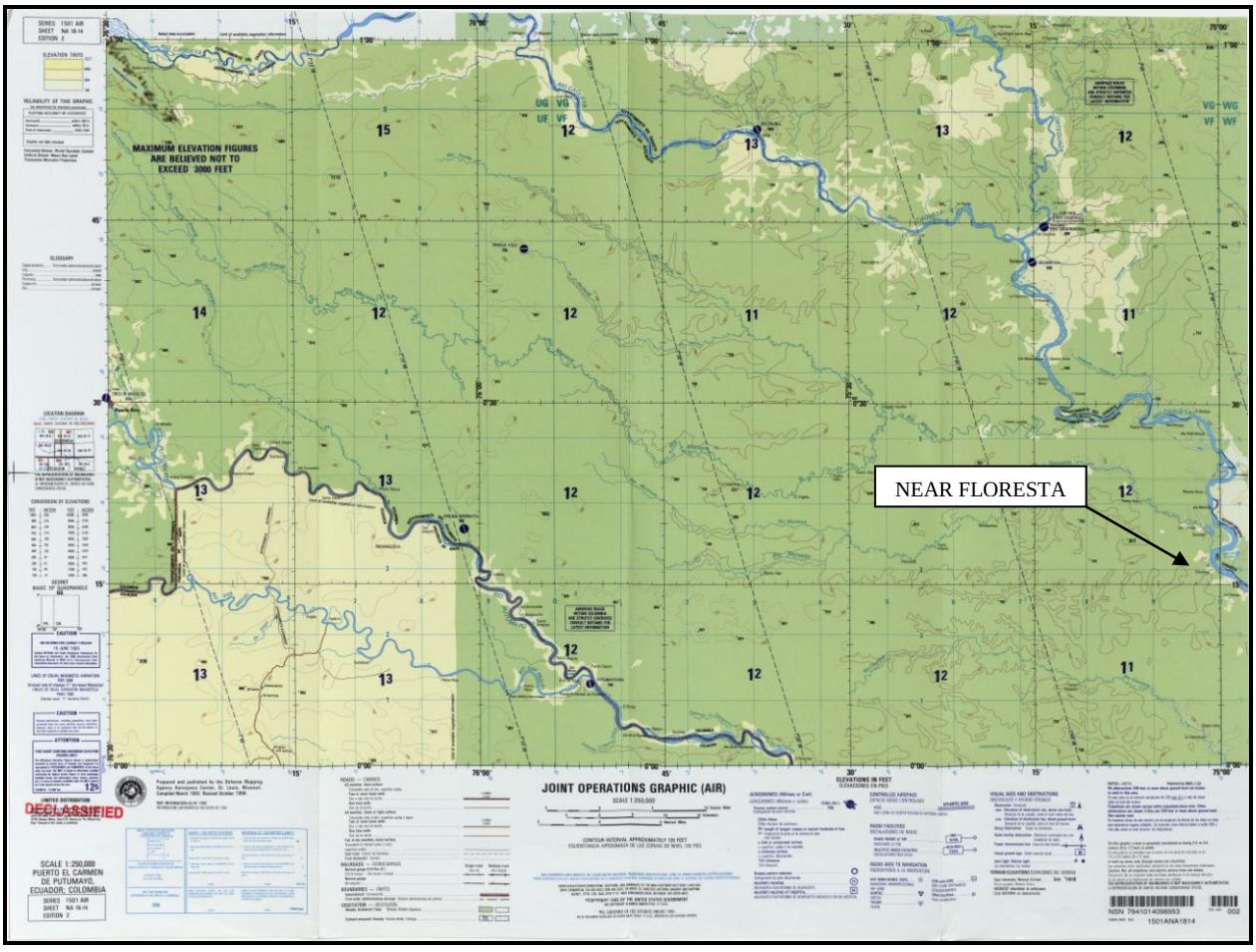


Figure 81: Las Delicias. (Defense Mapping Agency Aerospace Center 1992c).

El Billar

El Billar is located on the Caguán River in Caquetá southeast of Cartagena del Chairá and northeast of Las Delicias. (Figure 82) On March 2, 1998 a well-trained company-sized unit of the Colombian Army moved to disperse what it identified as a concentration of FARC guerrillas. That concentration proved to be three times the size of the Colombian Army unit, and was waiting in ambush. Former Defense Minister Rafael Pardo refers to the results as the FARC's best moment. (Pardo 2004, p. 538) The title to a history of US support to the Colombian government's war effort produced at Ft. Leavenworth is, *From Billar to Operations Fénix and Jaque: The Colombian Security Force Experience, 1998-2008* (Ramsey 2009). Ramsey describes the aftermath as one of recriminations, deflections and evaluations. Those evaluations indicated a Colombian government and army that might not be able to "reverse the erosion of government control in outlying departments." (Ramsey Ibid. p. 30) At Las Delicias, as before, even the larger FARC attacks were carefully executed against fixed bases with weak garrisons. At El Billar, the FARC took on a sizeable unit in the open and badly defeated it. The Army unit suffered over sixty-five dead and forty-five taken prisoner. Forty-seven survived. Fortunes for the Army had not reached bottom, however. In mid August, the FARC would effectively engage a pair of Army battalions near Riosucio, Chocó, killing forty soldiers in a three-day battle (Ramsey, Ibid, p. 44).

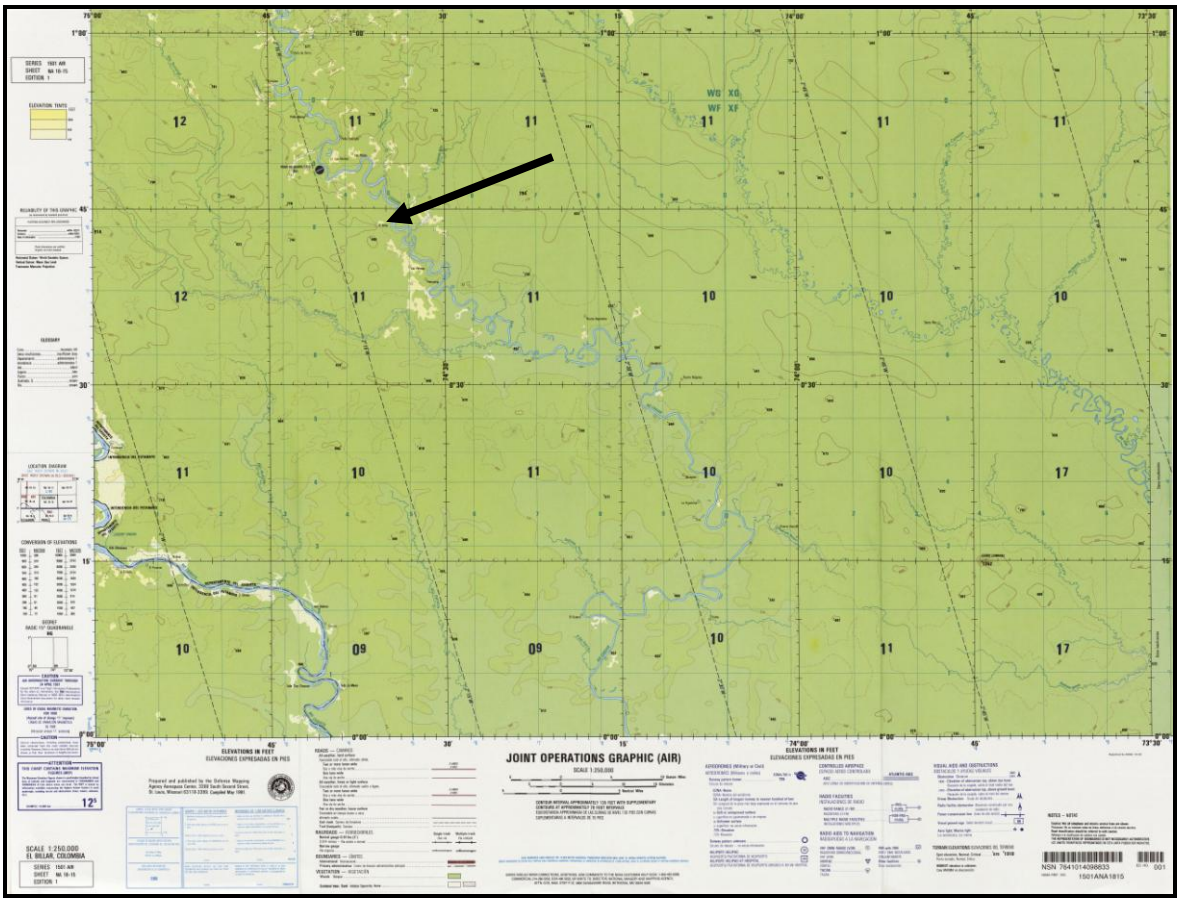


Figure 82: El Billar. (Defense Mapping Agency Aerospace Center 1991).

Miraflores

Miraflores is a county and county seat in Guaviare Department. The county covers a little less than five thousand square miles with the county seat along the Guaviare River east of San José del Guaviare. (Figure 83) Between 2005 and 2012, the population apparently dropped in the county from around 6,700 to 5,400, while the county seat's population dropped from a little under 1,600 to a little over 1,200. (Miraflores 2013) The county seat was built along the banks of the Vaupes River, which runs through the middle of the county toward the east. The principle geographic feature of the town is the airfield. Only a few miles of local unpaved roads extend from the town, so almost all commercial or administrative access is by river or air.

On August 3, 1998, the FARC launched an attack on a large Colombian national police counternarcotics base in the town of Miraflores. One of the few battles in the war to be heavily reported in the United States (Brooks August 1998; Johnson August 1998), the attack was highly successful for the FARC.

> "'What we know is that the offensive was a complete disaster from the military point of view', a U.S. official said. 'The army got its butt kicked again.'...A State Department official said the Miraflores attack would have a 'negligible' effect on drug-fighting efforts. 'I don't want to downplay the devastation... there, but we will be able to carry on with our counter-narcotics programs', she said....Rangel, the security analyst, said the rebel success at Miraflores was especially striking because the guerrillas announced three months ago that the base was a target....Some officials here called the fighting a rebel 'farewell' to President Ernesto Samper, who leaves office on Friday. Analysts interpreted the offensive as a warning to President-elect Andres Pastrana that the rebels are in a position of strength for any talks aimed at ending the conflict." (Brooks August 1998)

> "Stunned politicians urged Colombians not to give up hope that President-elect Andres Pastrana may still begin peace talks with guerrillas after he comes to office Friday. But the offensive underscored that any talks may occur amid the heat of battle....'We need help because I think they are exhausted at the hospital',...'The weather was terrible yesterday. Planes flew over but they couldn't land. It's too dangerous to land....The strip is full of guerrillas,' said the

> Rev. Belarmino Correa, bishop in San Jose de Guaviare, the state capital....The offensive prompted some Colombian peace supporters to suggest that greater violence always precedes the onset of negotiations." (Johnson August 1998)

The FARC leaders did not intend or execute it as a local guerrilla hit-and-run 'presence' event. They had marshaled over four thousand of their fighters and coordinated a sustained attack that overpowered the garrison, killing at least 16 and taking 139 prisoners. The base was ruined operationally and the government would not reestablish its full use for six years. The timing of the attack just after the presidential elections and shortly before the inauguration of Andrés Pastrana seemed to be a punctuation mark regarding the entering negotiating positions. The Miraflores attack was in part a propagandistic or strategic extortion event, following the attack at Billar and the attack on Las Delicias at what seemed to have become a regular FARC tempo for major operations. The FARC mounted a large series of harassments in Cundinamarca at almost the same moment, around August 3. These Cundinamarca attacks lend themselves to the idea that the overall FARC objective was one of disheartening the national mood and enforcing the proper negotiating attitude on the new president. They also support a more military theory of simple distraction or diversion to keep the Colombian senior commanders from deciding and acting quickly enough in support of the Miraflores garrison. The two objectives (strategic psychological and operational diversionary) were compatible. A look at the locations of the preceding battles at Las Delicias and Billar, and of the next large FARC effort after Miraflores, at Mitú, urges an hypothesis that the FARC leaders were combining a strategic political statement, with a more pragmatic and directly territorial campaign. They were moving to secure military control of routes out of the country to the Orinoco, the Amazon, and to

Ecuador. To secure these logistic lines of communication, the FARC intended to make the risk distances for the government intolerable. It was that intolerability that the FARC leaders felt would give them leverage at any negotiations.

A disaster for the Colombian police (which in Colombia belongs to the Ministry of Defense as does the Army), the outcome of the Miraflores battle resulted from the balance of military errors on the part of Colombian government leaders and competent decisions on the part of the FARC leaders. Predominant among the government errors was having placed the Miraflores base beyond the risk distance. Given the cost distances for support and resupply, and the meteorological conditions that restrict aircraft to playing only an intermittently significant role, the base at Miraflores was beyond the government's culminating point *ab initio*. The Colombian government, in light of the experiences of Las Delicias and Billar, could easily have calculated that given enough time (six months should have seemed enough), the FARC could marshal a significantly, sufficiently more powerful force than what had been stationed at the garrison. A number of tactical, intelligence and security errors played into the mix, but at the heart of the disaster sat the fact that the Colombian armed forces had still not respected the FARC capacity to marshal, manage and lead a large-scale operation in an area that challenged the government's logistical capacity. The battle at Mitú in November 1998 was highly predictable -- at least in hindsight.

Figure 83: Miraflores on the Vaupes River. (Defense Mapping Agency Aerospace Center 1992b).

Mitú

Early on the morning of November 1, 1998, three months after the FARC victory at Miraflores, a coordinated FARC attack on the police garrison at Mitú, Vaupes, cleared the departmental capital and its airport of all government forces. Analysts consider the capture of Mitú to be the high water mark of FARC military power. It may have been the point at which FARC overall strategic concept of the war changed from one of constant hit-and-run planning that featured *tomas* to a more territorially patent strategy that would thenceforth feature the actual taking of key terrain with the intent to stay and defend it against counterattack. The nature of the FARC military effort had always been to build logistic strength in order to marshal larger and larger forces in order to be able to attack larger and larger targets at an accelerating tempo.

Economists Michael Spagat and Jorge Restrepo demonstrated using economic statistical methods that the violent events in Colombia followed what is in some social science parlance known as the 'power law.' (Johnson, Neil F., et al. 2006) In almost linear correlation, the larger the force the FARC was able to muster, the larger the number of victims in the attacks it made. The FARC would attempt to take and hold terrain when they were able, or would yield it, retreat and disperse if such were necessary. That had been the FARC way of warfare since Marquetalia. By the late 1990s, the FARC leaders felt they could amass enough mobile strength and position enough small units in neurologically significant points eventually to be able to strangle one or more of the major Colombian cities and make increasingly effective extortionary demands on a strategic scale. To say that with the taking of Mitú the FARC had jumped qualitatively from guerrilla to mobile warfare, however, would be misleading. FARC guerrilla warfare was and had been mobile. If Mitú was to have been different, it was in the intention to stay -- to *not* be mobile.

The FARC stayed in Mitú for two days. The government of Colombia, sensing not so much some change in FARC strategy, but the fact that the FARC had reached a targeting moment in which it chose a Departmental capital, committed exceptional economic, military and diplomatic resources to retake Mitú. Moving as many troops as fast as possible, and using an airfield in Brazil to stage the counterattack, the Colombian military cleared Mitú of FARC elements on August 3. The Colombian military had not made a timely response at Miraflores, so the actual scope of the Colombian military necessities was not revealed by that earlier defeat. In re-taking Mitú, however, the Colombian Army faced the logistic realities. Boulding's Loss of Power Gradient is imperative and ruthless. The FARC withdrew without suffering an inordinate number of casualties. They did not expect the effective reaction on the part of the government

but neither were they without an effective retreat plan. The Colombian Army, although it had risen to the occasion and had exercised the full range of its operational capacity to implement a timely definitive response, also had no remaining strength with which to make an effective pursuit of the FARC forces into the jungle.

The FARC command clearly did not give up on the idea of marshaling large formations to attack significant targets. In mid-November of the following year, the FARC mounted a major attack on Inírida at the confluence of the Guaviare Atabapo and Orinoco rivers. By that time the preparations of the defenders were much greater, and the assault a failure. Soon, other pressures including from the AUC in a variety of zones, and perhaps of most importance the effectiveness of Colombian army operations to clear FARC units out of Cundinamarca around the national capital, changed the general panorama of possibilities. If the FARC did not meet its high water mark at Mitú, FARC leaders did not yet realize it. Within a year or two, that high water mark had been passed.

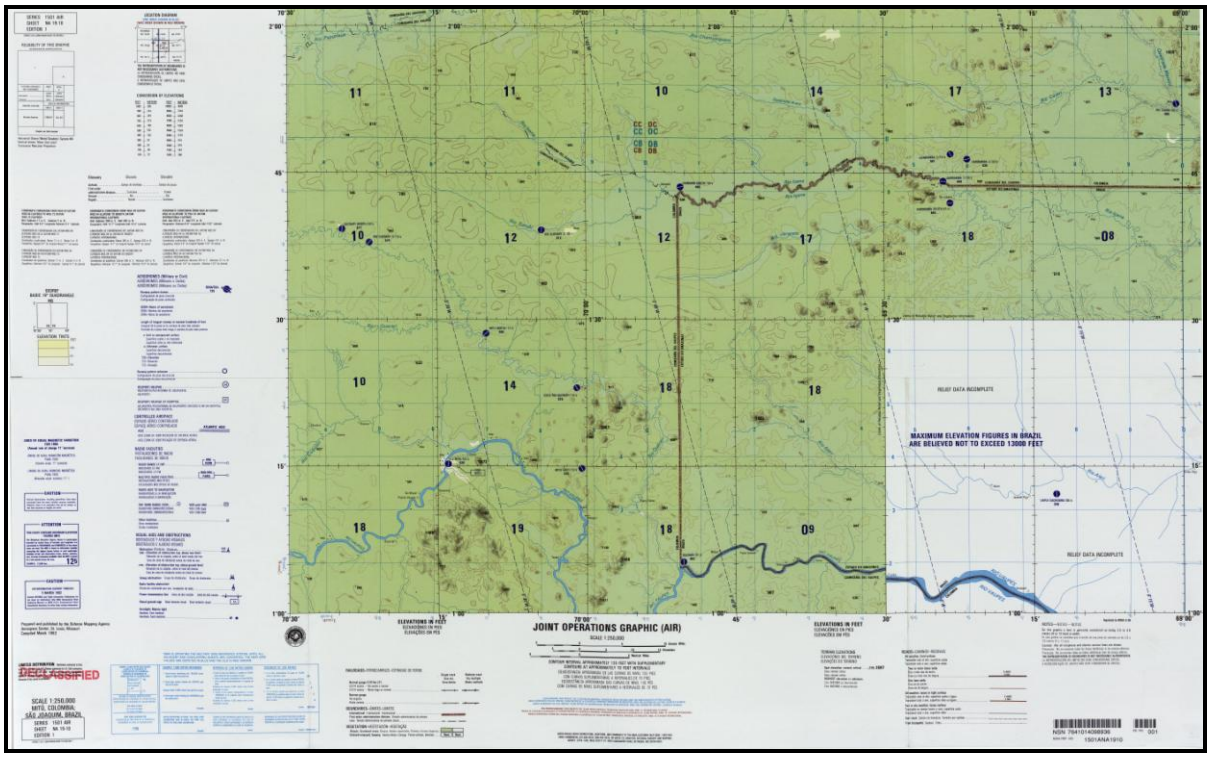


Figure 84: Mitú area. (Defense Mapping Agency Aerospace Center 1992a) Mitu is located along the Vaupes River to the southwest. The Colombian-Brazilian border is in the center of the sheet. As is evident from this map, Mitú is a relatively isolated departmental capital.

Gato Negro

After the Colombian government had confirming intelligence, and had marshaled enough force, a Colombian joint military unit assaulted a large cocaine processing facility at Barrancominas, Guaviare on February 5, 2001. Operation Gato Negro moved 3,000 Colombian soldiers, who found 60 cocaine labs, 22 landing strips, 13,000 hectares of coca, 16 encampments, and more than 20 bars, bordellos and billiard parlors. (MacKenzie 448; Guzmán, 95) The operation against Tranquilandia in 1984 had proven to anyone who was paying attention that the cocaine trade had changed the scale of the military challenge for the government. Operation Gato Negro began to bring that point home to the Colombian public.

I do not know the source of the data, or the nature of the methodology supporting the maps in Figure 85. The sequence purports to show the changing balance of strength between the principal contenders in the Colombian war from the early 1990s to 2011. The darkest green is advantage to the Colombian military and the darkest red to the FARC. It appears to show that in the context of an increasing number of contested counties, the Colombian Armed Forces increasingly held or gained advantage over the FARC in almost every county until perhaps 2011, when the FARC may have gained back initiative in some counties. It appears the FARC regained advantage in border counties according to this interpretation.

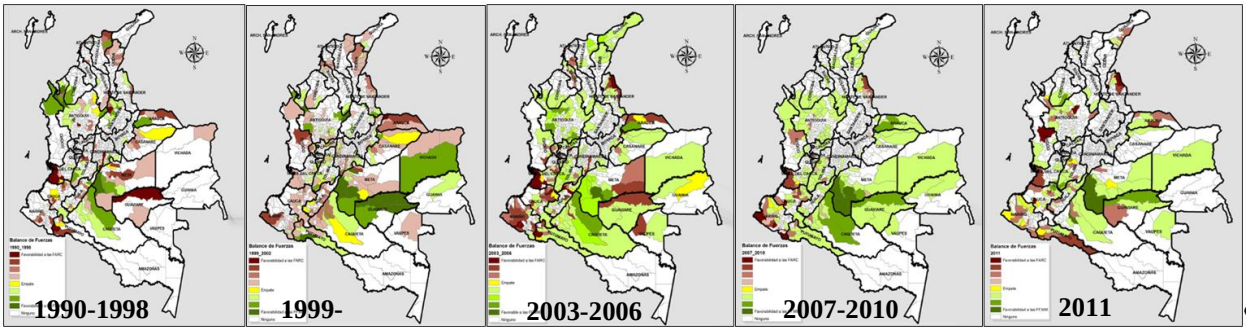


Figure 85: Sequence suggesting the balance of military advantage, county-by-county, between the Colombian armed forces and the FARC. (Fundación Ideas para la Paz 2013). The darkest green is advantage to the Colombian military and the darkest red to the FARC.

As an aside, geographic forensics has taken a central role in Colombian human rights enforcement practices. With the passing of time, 'order of battle' information has become increasingly transparent and public, to the extent that the names of most units and subunits of all the armed groups are quickly tagged to the places of their violent actions; likewise the names of the units' leaders. Figure 86 shows part of a rough 'order of battle' map from about 2004.

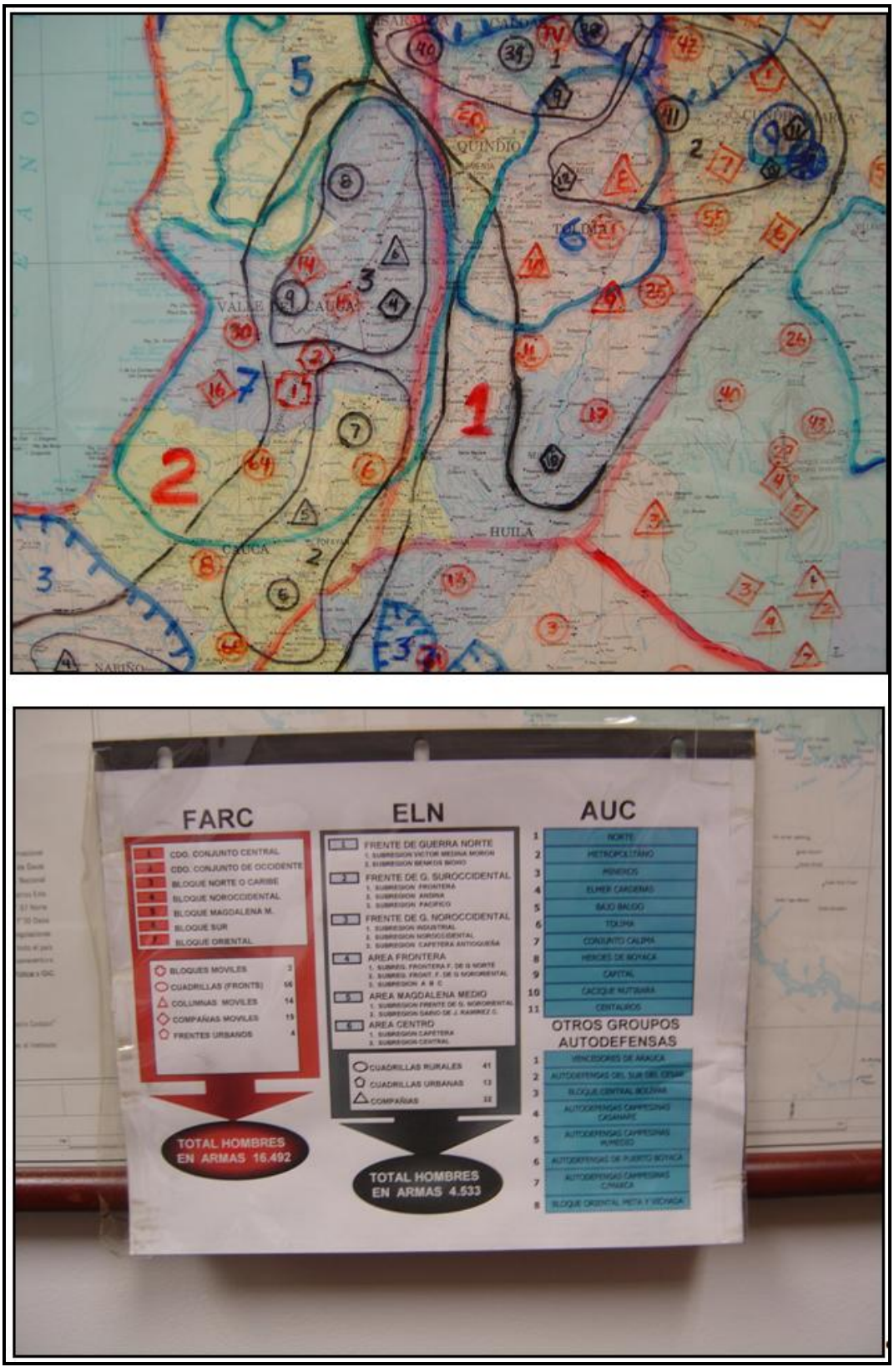


Figure 86: Typical 'order of battle' map overlay and legend, circa 2004 (Order of battle... 2004).

Zones

Figure 87 shows the wall map in Figure 4 with my selection of eleven areas or zones. I derive the eleven zones from the Colombian spatial expressions regarding the location of the war (as in the subsection titled "Where is the War?" on pages 121-158). Figure 87 synthesizes the Colombian interpretations regarding the most significant loci of the conflict. However, I omit five of the conflict zones noted in Figure 56. These five are the Tumaco area in the southwest Pacific coastal region; the Buenaventura area farther north along the Pacific coast west of Cali, the Urabá-Atraco River area in the northwest (south of the Panama border), Eastern Antioquia, and the Colombian Massif to the south. I make this omission for efficiency and clarity. Their human and physical geographic conditions do not add to the examination of the dissertation's theory either with supportive or negative evidence. Three of the omitted zones fall in the Pacific lowlands and feature *Afrodecendiente* communal lands, but this ethnic specificity does not appear to add to or subtract anything from the analysis. I do not leave the five omitted areas completely unconsidered, however, as a few of the massacres, *tomas* and disputed smuggling routes mentioned elsewhere in this text occurred within the five omitted zones. The eleven zones selected for discussion below are notorious among Colombians. Colombian scholars attempt to place the spatial concentrations of organized violence into an overall national context. I believe, in spite of sincere efforts of notable *violentólogos* (violentologists) that no one has satisfactorily explained that context. As a small contribution to a more satisfactory explanation, I offer the coincidence of geographic phenomena that improve a fugitive armed group's likelihood of achieving impunity (getting away with whatever they are trying to get away with). The eleven zones do not share all of the relevant geographic phenomena, but the common denominator is a like effect on risk distances during armed pursuits.

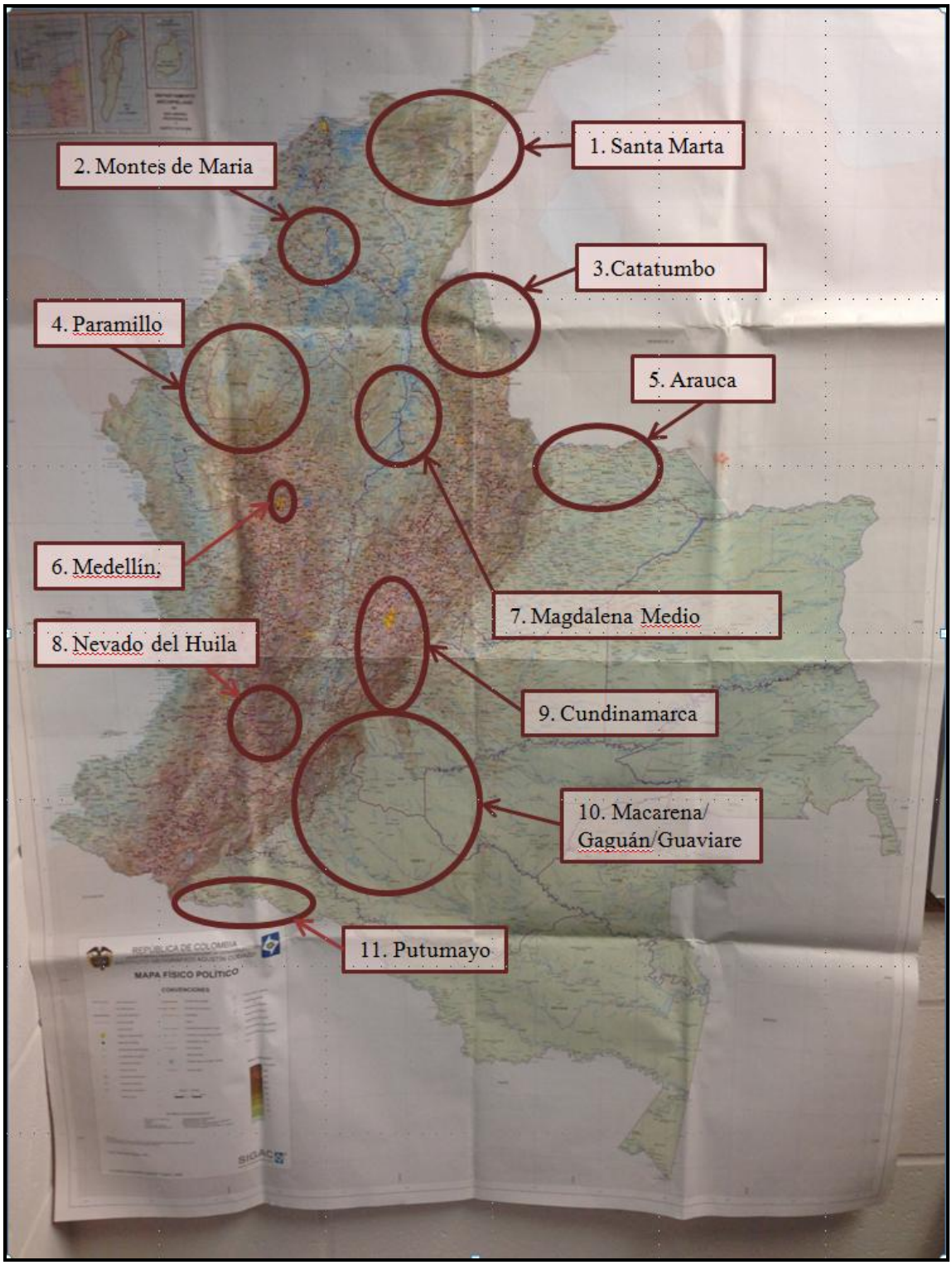


Figure 87: Selected conflict zones in order of discussion. This is not a depiction of all of the conflictive areas in Colombia. Notably excluded are the Tumaco, Buenaventura, Urabá-Atraco and Eastern Antioquia areas.

Santa Marta

The Pacific port city of Santa Marta sits at the base of the Nevado de Santa Marta national park where Simon Bolivar peak rises to 18,700 feet in less than thirty miles from the coast. (Figures 88 and 89) Aracataca, Gabriel García Márquez' boyhood home, and the apparent inspiration for the fictional county of Maconda, is located about 40 miles to the south. The banana workers' strike at Ciénaga in 1928 (between Santa Marta and Maconda, or Aracataca) gives the area prominent space in the Colombian activist imaginary. That action did not cause the building of an effective guerrilla in that generation, but its location serves to help describe a long existent quantity of latent support for resistance movements. In other words, the relevant human geography that might be conducive or favorable to a guerrilla, while not displayed by the digital elevation model, is at least reflected by some of the place names. The outlines of organized action, as described hagiographically by the Colombian left, draw on historical moments and place identities. They prove the existence and shape of early, organized efforts to rebalance power, and are undeniable arguments for a strain of motivations that I find hard to deny as a causal factor in Colombia's conflict. The Santa Marta region is one of several excellent examples. In the overall dynamic of what has made Santa Mata a violent region in recent decades, however, the region's geography, highly favorable to the fugitive and smuggler, is a far more important ingredient.

Also in the Santa Marta area and easily discernible from the maps, is an abrupt proximity of phenomena that would favor anyone who was trying to get away with illicit activity and found themselves on the run. The rugged slopes of the Nevado de Santa Marta are close to the city and close to the sea. They are also not far from the Serranía de Perijá and the Venezuelan border. Several indigenous tribes, which have a tradition of autonomy and resistance of their own, form

part of the landscape in which a fugitive can make his whereabouts unknowable. In addition to the convergence of phenomena favorable to the escape, a guerrilla organization that thrives by economic parasitism will find coal trains, oil pipelines, drug cultivations, and burghers. Because Santa Marta has a pair of constricted access options along the coast north of the Santa Marta range or to the southwest past Ciénaga, it has been relatively easy for highwaymen to selectively restrict economic traffic for the purpose of targeting extortions at Santa Marta businesses. Santa Marta suffered widespread revolutionary taxation for some time. While a quantity of sympathy for the resistance has existed in the Santa Marta area for decades, perhaps almost a century now, the combined geographic facts of nearby commodities and contraband geography have allowed the guerrilla organizations to survive in the Santa Marta area.

In recent government priority documents (Centro de Coordinación de Acción Integral 2010), the Santa Marta area has been downgraded, the city enjoying some respite as the FARC and the ELN have been disabled in recent years. The reasons relate to greater and more efficient military effort against the guerrillas, and I believe to an erosion of the sympathy toward the FARC and the ELN. The geography, too, has changed, with the urban and lowland areas becoming more and more densely developed. However, a paragraph from a 1993 geographic analysis of Cesar Department is perfectly applicable twenty years later:

"In spite of its location bordering the Republic of Venezuela, commercial exchange with the neighboring country is not economically determinant in the department, given the important limitation imposed by the relief of the Serranía de Perijá. Nevertheless, the volume of merchandise that enters the department illegally is important." (Barney 1993, p. 17) (my translation)

Note from the maps in figures 88 and 89 that almost every county in the region is partly mountainous and partly lowland plain. Almost all the counties have major commodity transport infrastructure moving through them. Urban areas are in close proximity to remote areas, and most of the counties border on the sea or Venezuela. The images in Figure 90 are from Colombian military briefings. They show the locations of guerrilla presence as understood by the Colombian army. They all have a similar relationship to the foothill approaches to uphill sanctuary.

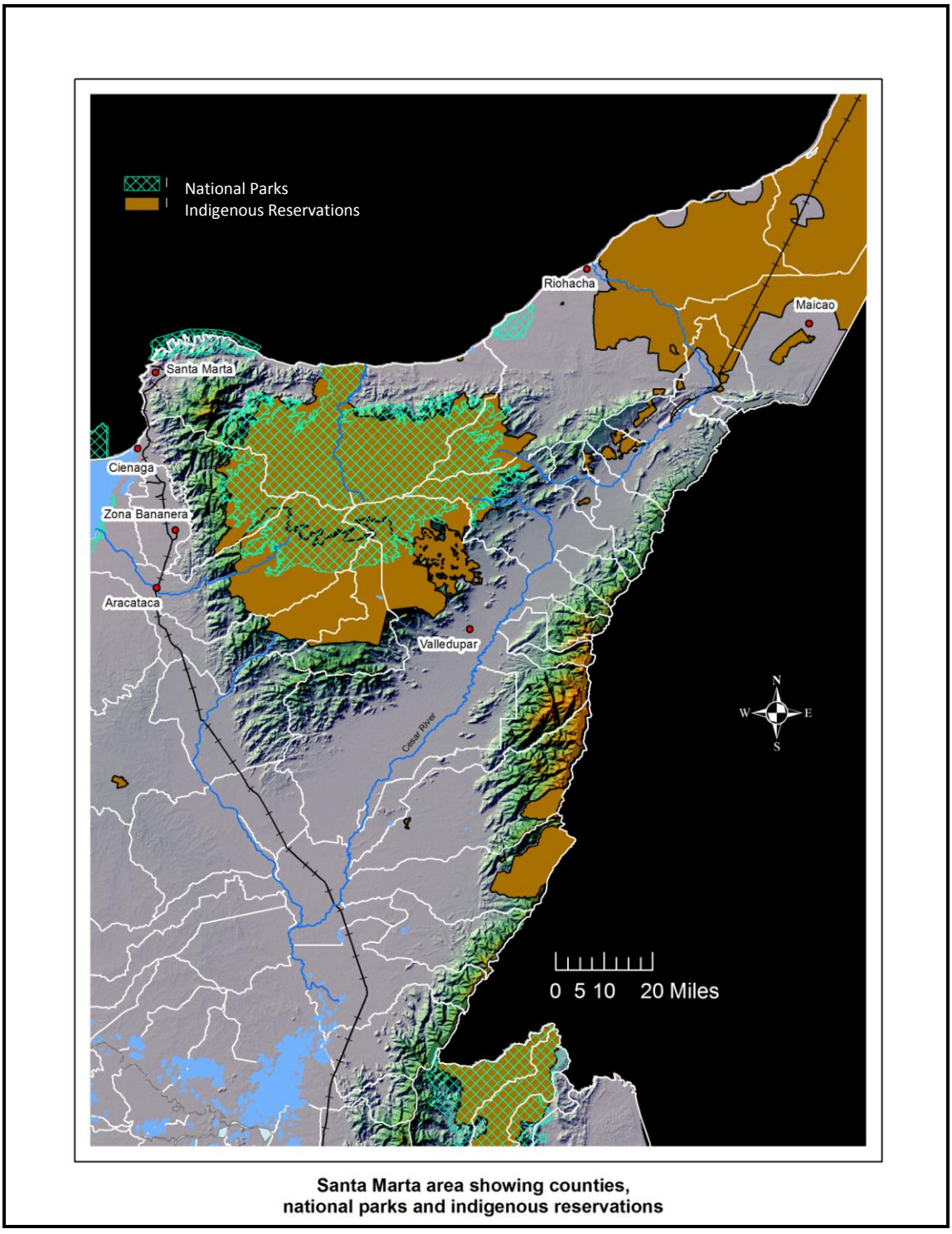


Figure 88: The Santa Marta area. White lines are county boundaries. (data from SIGOT 2013).

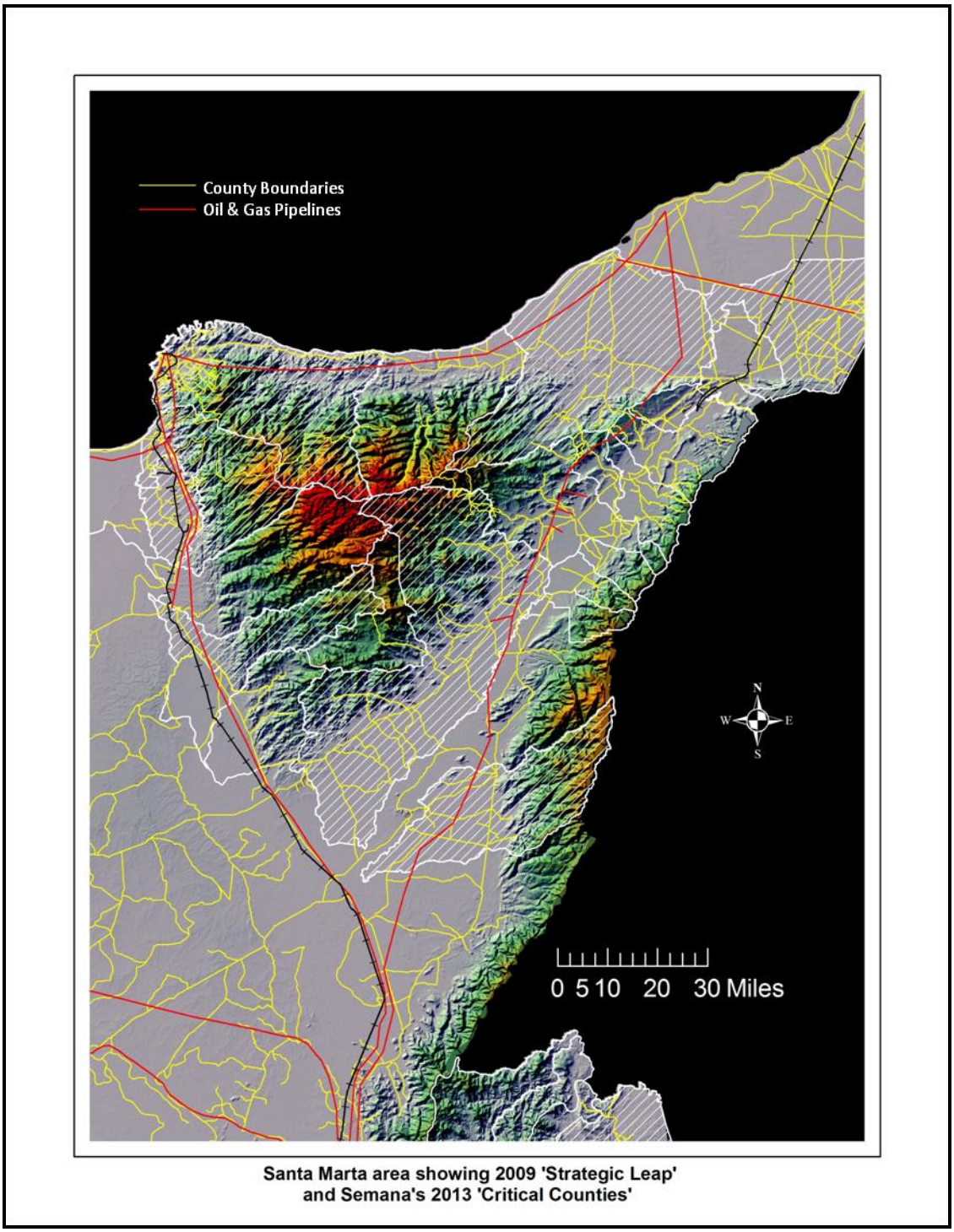


Figure 89: The Santa Marta area. Yellow lines are roads, white lines are counties. (data from SIGOT 2013).

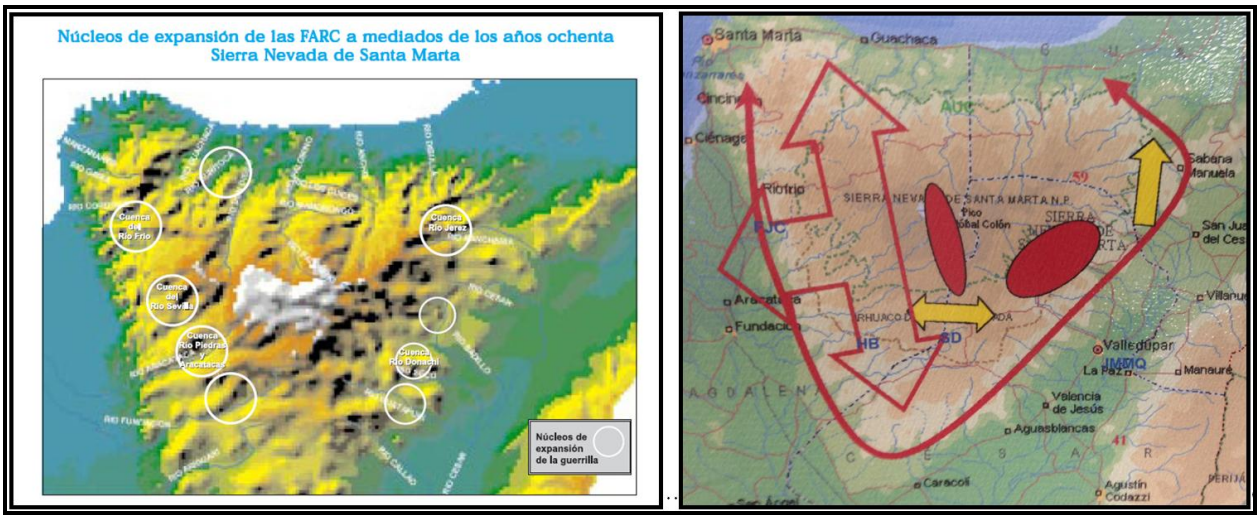


Figure 90: Two renderings of guerrilla presence from Colombian police or military briefings. The slide to the left is titled, "FARC Expansion Nuclei in the mid 1980's." (FMSO 2013).

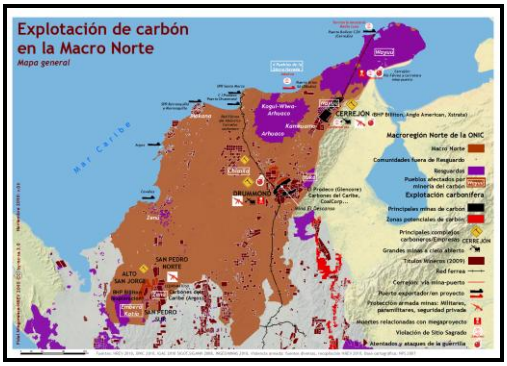


Figure 91: Coal focus. This map of the region relates one impression of the coal industry in relation to the conflict and to indigenous reservation lands (in purple). (Geoactivism.org 2013).

Montes de María

The Montes de María area is one of the most examined academically and propagandized internationally. Entering Montes de María into an Internet search engine will return more hits than anyone could digest. We can assume that the area's competitive value drives this broad interest as much as poignancy of the suffering of the people there. Figure 92 shows the *montes* (hills) in Montes de María. A 2003 government pamphlet titled *Panorama actual de la región de Montes de María y su entorno* (Current panorama of the region of Montes de Maria and its

environs) (Observatorio...2003) includes a total of thirty-six counties as part of the general area, most of which were at that time included in the government's 'rehabilitation and consolidation zone'. The geographic concept is expansive, but if a woman were a native of El Carmen de Bolívar, she most certainly would be from the Montes de María, and if woman were a native of Guaranda to the south, that woman's argument for being from the Montes might seem to the woman from El Carmen de Bolívar as a bit tenuous. Today, the government's number of 'Montes' priority counties is much reduced. Regardless, the reason for the area's celebrity is its close-in remoteness. It is near and between major seaports while offering the kind of rugged topography that favors contraband movement. It is not as far away in Euclidean terms from government base areas, but chasing armed groups has been dangerous. The distribution of armed actions, homicides, kidnappings, and the culpable presence of communist and anti-communist guerrillas centers on El Carmen de Bolívar County. Although the major road network passes through the county seat, the most remote area in terms of contraband transportation is to the northwest within El Carmen de Bolívar and the eastern part of San Onofre County. The next-over counties -- Córdoba to the west-southwest, Ovejas to the south, and San Juan de Nepomuceno to the north are the next most to suffer. Not only has the area long provided at least temporary sanctuary for units of the various guerrilla and paramilitary groups, it also presents targets for parasitism and basic provisioning.

However, partly as a result (paradoxical perhaps) of the symbolic, propagandistic importance it has been given as a zone of resistance, the Montes de María area was targeted for inordinate government attention, to include land restitution, road building and the promotion of large industrial agricultural enterprises. The government no longer considers the Montes de María area quite the conflictive hot spot that it once did, not because the people have leapt up in

human developmental or socio-economic performance indices, but because the FARC and ELM are finding it more difficult to survive there. A 'Transversal de Montes de María' road project, slowly taking form from Chivulito in Sucre past Macayepo toward El Carmen de Bolívar, will cover little more than thirty miles and is expensive considering the numbers of persons it will serve. However, it will cut travel times for some rural residents by a factor of ten. That factor is enough to lengthen the risk distances of government troops who will be more able to cut off the escape of some escaping guerrilla or smuggler.

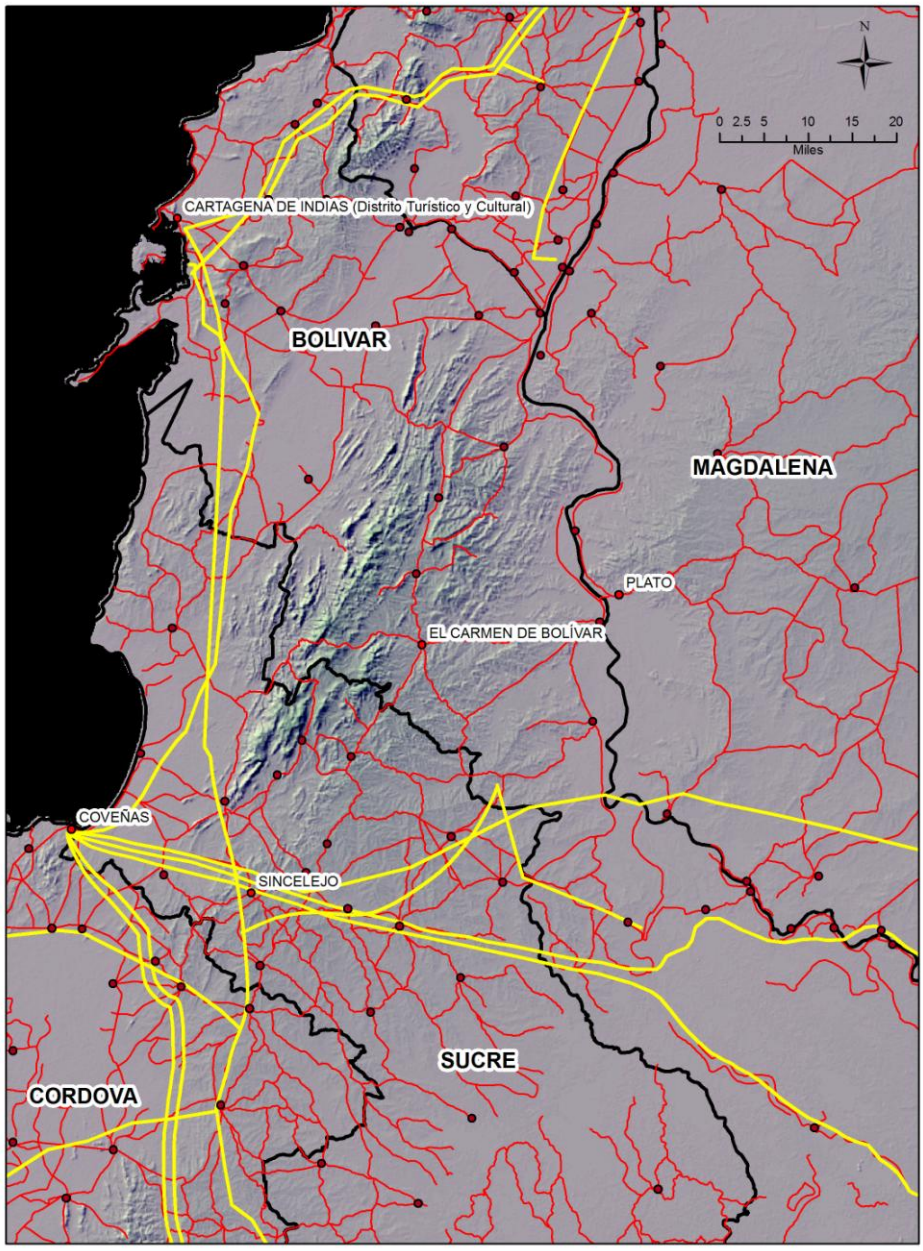
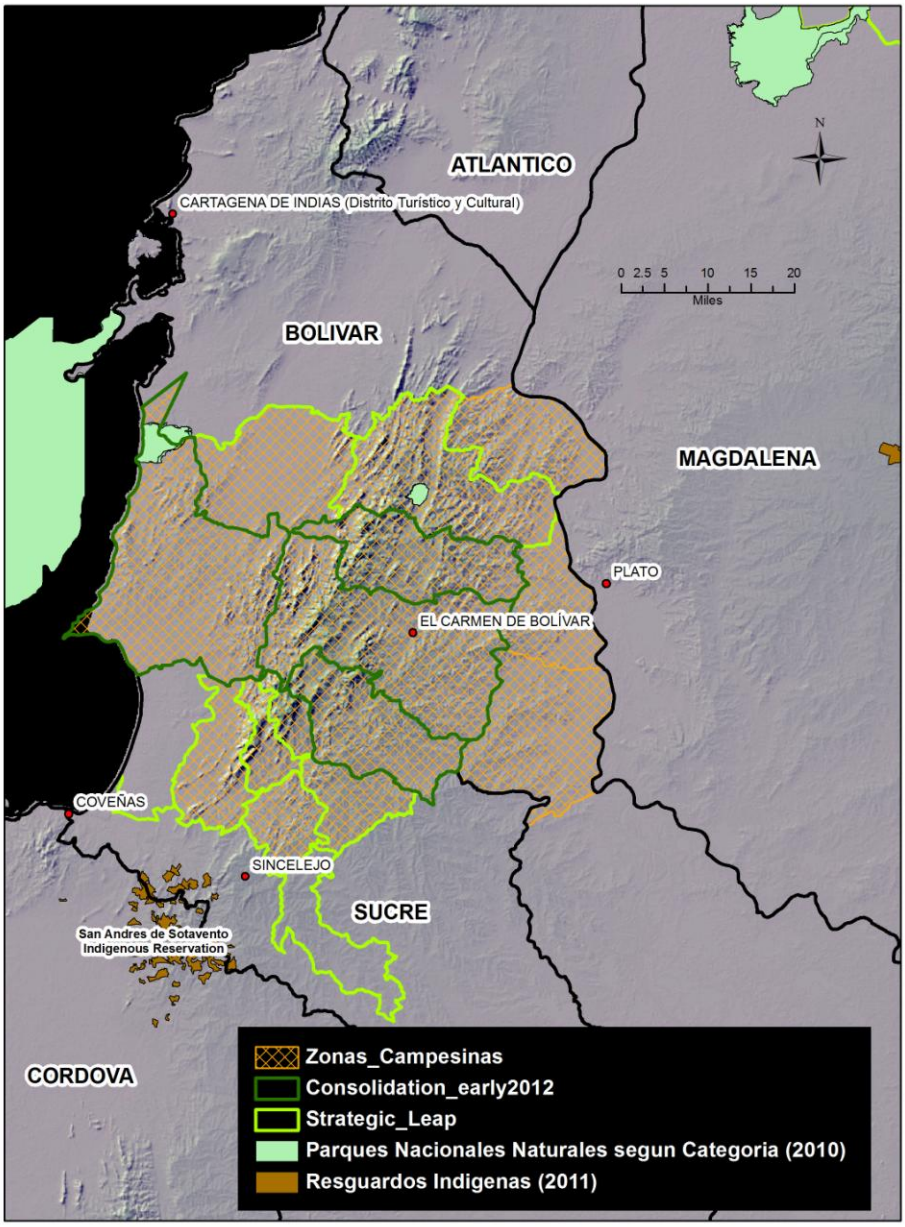


Figure 92: The area of the Serranía de San Juacinto, more commonly known as the 'Montes de Maria.' (data from SIGOT 2013).



Montes de Maria area showing departments, counties considered government priorities, and counties where 'campesino reservation zones' are being promoted.

Figure 93: Montes de María area highlighting several geographic factors that favor impunity. (data from SIGOT 2013).

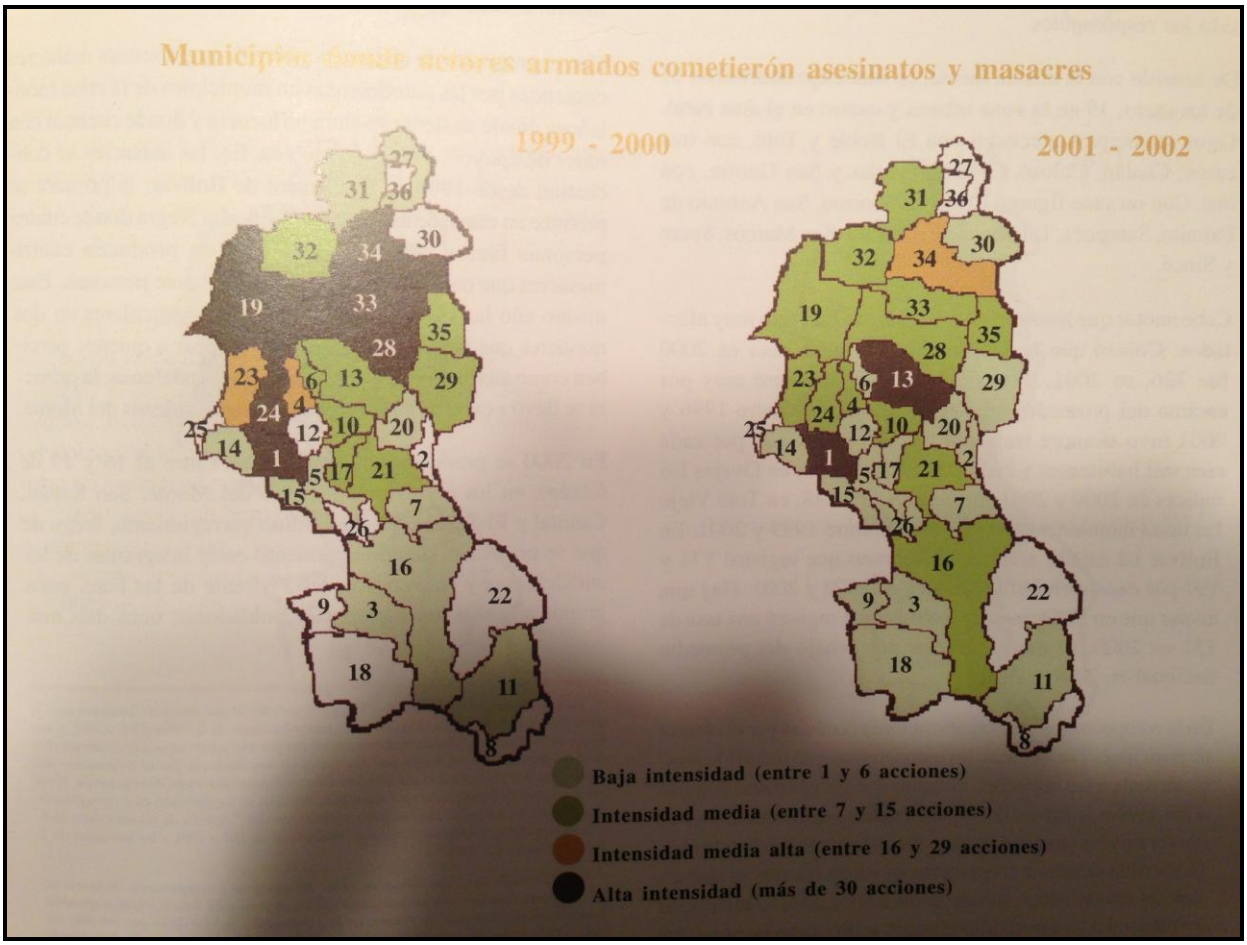


Figure 94: Most violent areas in the Montes de Maria. (Observatorio.2003) The title translates to, "Counties where armed actors committed murders and massacres." Darker is more intense.

Catatumbo

The Catatumbo has long been an area of political contention and violence. It is of particular interest in mid 2013 because it is the scene of FARC-inspired social and political mass actions (marches, strikes, roadblocks) in support of the FARC negotiating positions at peace talks the government and the FARC are conducting in Havana, Cuba. The area is unique within Colombia's national borders given that it features lowlands that belong to the Maracaibo drainage basin. The international demarcation is not, in other words, along the crest of the

Andes (as it is farther north along the Serranía de Perijá separating the south-flowing waters of Vaupes River from waters flowing east-northeast in Venezuela. The lowland areas of the Catatumbo are oil-producing areas also suitable for the cultivation of coca, much like the Middle Magdalena. On the Venezuelan side of the border, a gallon of gasoline might easily cost $.25 while the average price in Colombia runs closer to $4.00 per gallon (Romero and Ramírez March 2011).

Family demographics in the region are such that it would be exceptional to find a family with any generational roots in the area that did not have members of both Venezuelan and Colombian citizenship admixed along the border. Catatumbo is a favorable region for sustained contraband. Parents will not deny a son 25-cent gas, especially when one of their in-laws is the local police commander, who would hardly be able to come to the family dinner that Sunday after having arrested a relative. The smuggling routes, rules and relationships have been in place for centuries. New perhaps is an ideological differential almost as great as that of the price of gasoline. The Bolivarian Socialism of the 21st Century welcomes FARC revolutionaries, which for more than a decade have found passage and sanctuary at a much lower price than had previously been the case in Venezuela.

Who chases whom? The uphill-favors-the-fugitive rule might seem belied in the Catatumbo area, given that it is downhill from the Serrania to the Venezuelan border. In practice, however, at operative scales, the uphill rule has remained operant. The Colombian government response to lawlessness and loss of sovereign control has understandably included placing more ground troops and police in the region. The activity of these detachments has included the building of professional relationships with counterparts across the border, manning border crossing points more effectively, and attempting to improve the image of the Colombian

government among the locals. Stopping the contraband of cheap fuel runs counter to that last notion, however. All along the border there are informal concessions to smuggling. For instance, gasoline is sold in plastic gallon jugs after having been decanted from oversized automobile gasoline tanks that have been fitted to old sedans, all this in spite of there being a major oil refinery near Tibú. It is no wonder that the FARC is insistently promoting the establishment of a *zona de reserva campesina*, which would apparently, at first, have a patchworked territorial demarcation in various townships of all the principal Catatumbo counties.

Opportunities for parasitic behavior in the zone are substantial. The counties receive significant royalties (*regalias*) from the central government on the basis of local hydrocarbon production, and these remittances have been a traditional attraction for bribes and extortions. The management of county resources and the locally produced rules for political representation are, as elsewhere in Colombia, a motivator for any of the illegal armed organizations to attempt to gain county-level political power by whatever means seems most effective.

A look at the Departmental map (Norte de Santander 1:400, 000) shows the wholly artificial nature of the international boundary as contrasted to the remoteness provided in the north by the Catatumbo-Bari National Park area and in the west by the *Cordillera Oriental* (Eastern Range). The national scale maps (for instance, figures 26, p. 118 or48, p. 126) reveal the relationship that the Catatumbo smuggling zone has to other old smuggling routes within Colombia and to the most violently contested areas in recent decades, including the Magdalena Medio/Sierra San Lucas area, Paramillo and Urabá-Atraco, or the Santa Marta area. It makes good business as well as security sense for an armed smuggling organization to establish national and international reach to weave routes and refuges across regional space on a strategic scale.

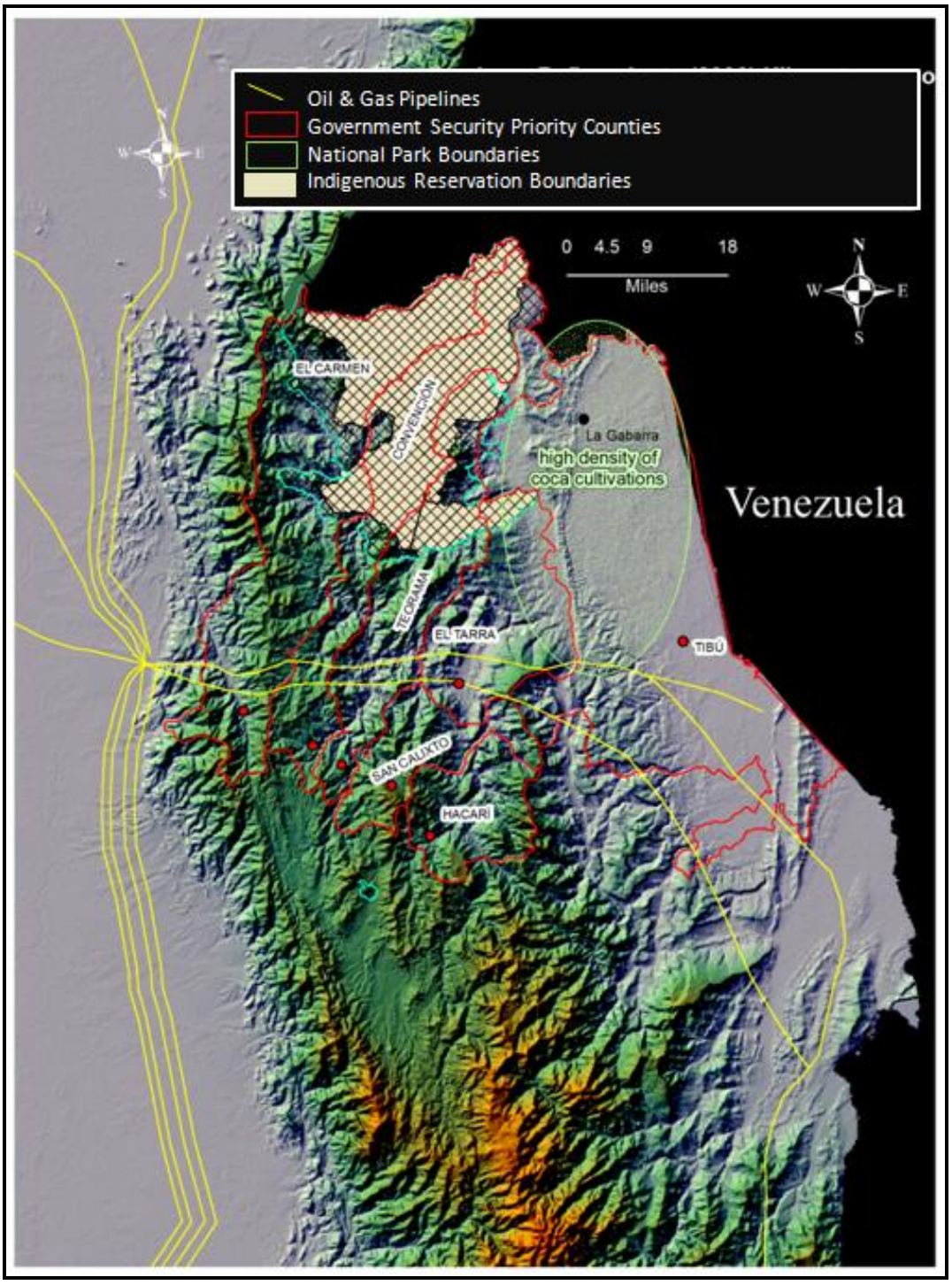


Figure 95: The Catatumbo. (data from SIGOT 2013).

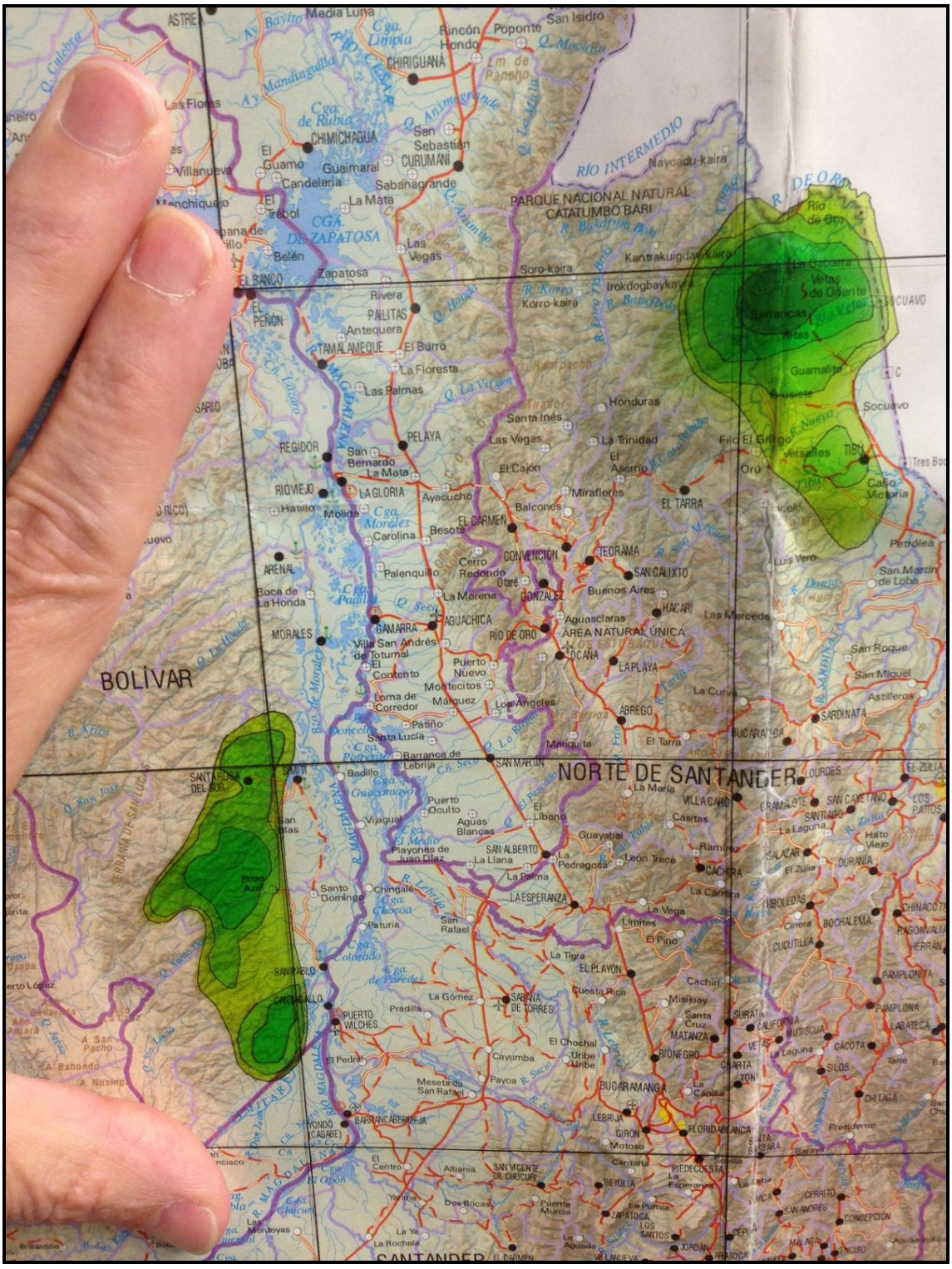


Figure 96: Coca cultivation 'blobology' (government jargon for the methodology for determining illicit cultivation extents and their depiction) circa 2000 for Catatumbo and Serranía San de Lucas areas. (Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi 2006).

Paramillo

The 'peripheral' counties of Antioquia, among them the counties of Dabeiba, Pequé, Ituango, Segovia, Remedios and Turbo, for instance, (Figure 99) are notorious as foci for armed competition (whether massacres, *tomas*, or firefights and ambushes) between the army and illegal armed groups, or among the latter. Of the violence of the 1950's, Professor Mary Roldan asserts that "it proved most severe in Antioquia's peripheral zones where land tenure, production, labor, and the state's authority were markedly different from the dominant paradigm in Antioquia's centrally settled municipalities." (Roldan 2002, p. 7; Figure 99) That geographic pattern did not change since the period of the *Violencia*. Roldan's is a common note about the absence of state authority. The authority to which Roldan and others allude is indeed related to distance as proposed herein. The cost distances that state authorities face in reaching or remaining in peripheral communities is relatively great. However, I would note that the impunity accorded to or extracted by armed elements is not due so much to the locations' status as peripheral to the economic 'center' (Medellín). I believe the recurrent violence suffered in places like Pequé Debeiba, or Apartadó is more closely related to their being peripheral to an even more remote area, in this case the Paramillo. Like the Nevado del Huila, the Paramillo (national park at its center) is all but inaccessible. The Paramillo is nonetheless a transportation hub. It is a hub for clandestine transportation because it affords a fugitive element a best chance to distance itself from pursuers. Going both east and west, to and from the Panamanian border or the Caribbean coast, a guerrilla can make intolerable the distances to culminating points (the risk distances) faced by a pursuing force.

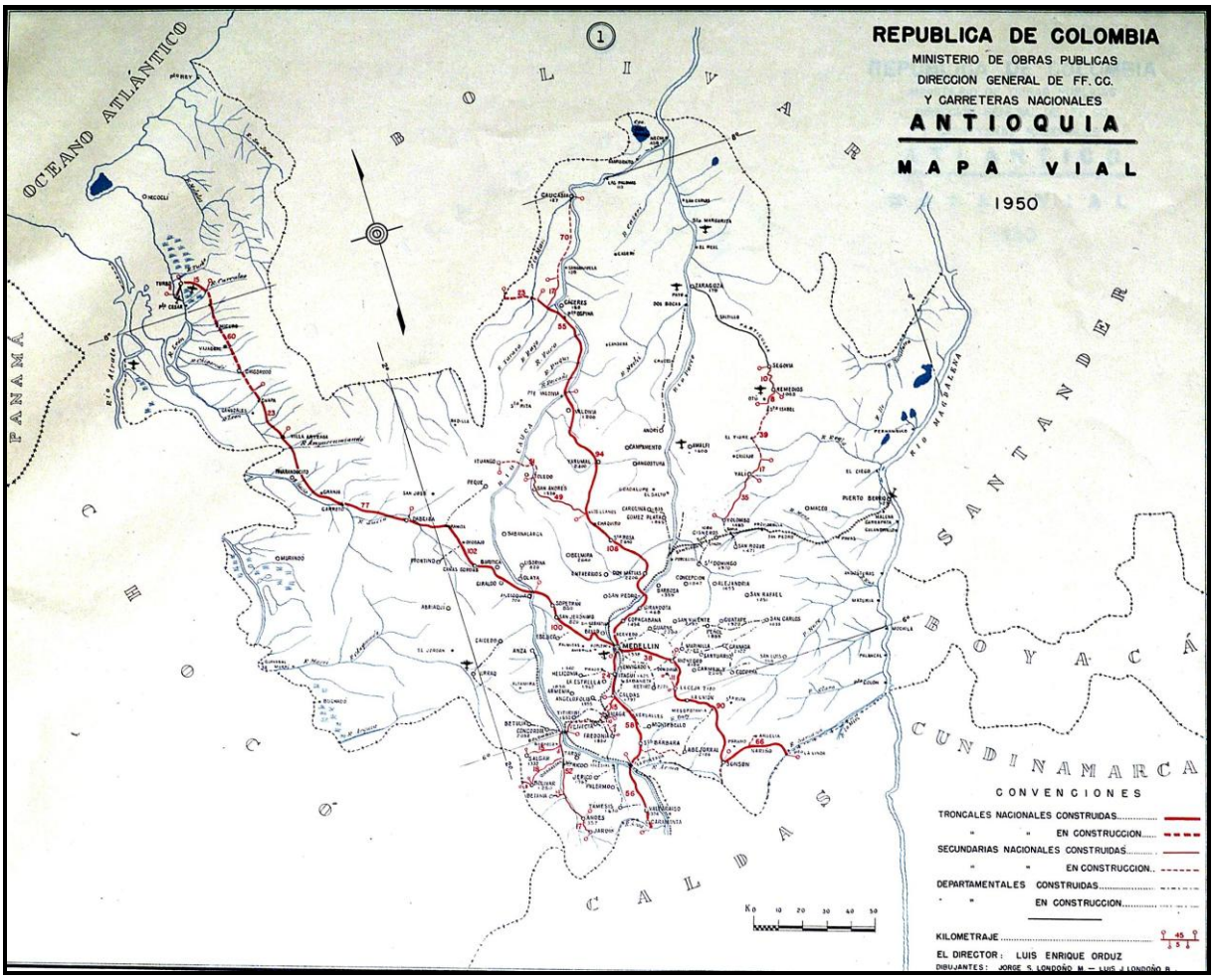


Figure 97: Antoquia roads circa 1950. (Augustín Codazzi Geographic Institute collection photographed by author).

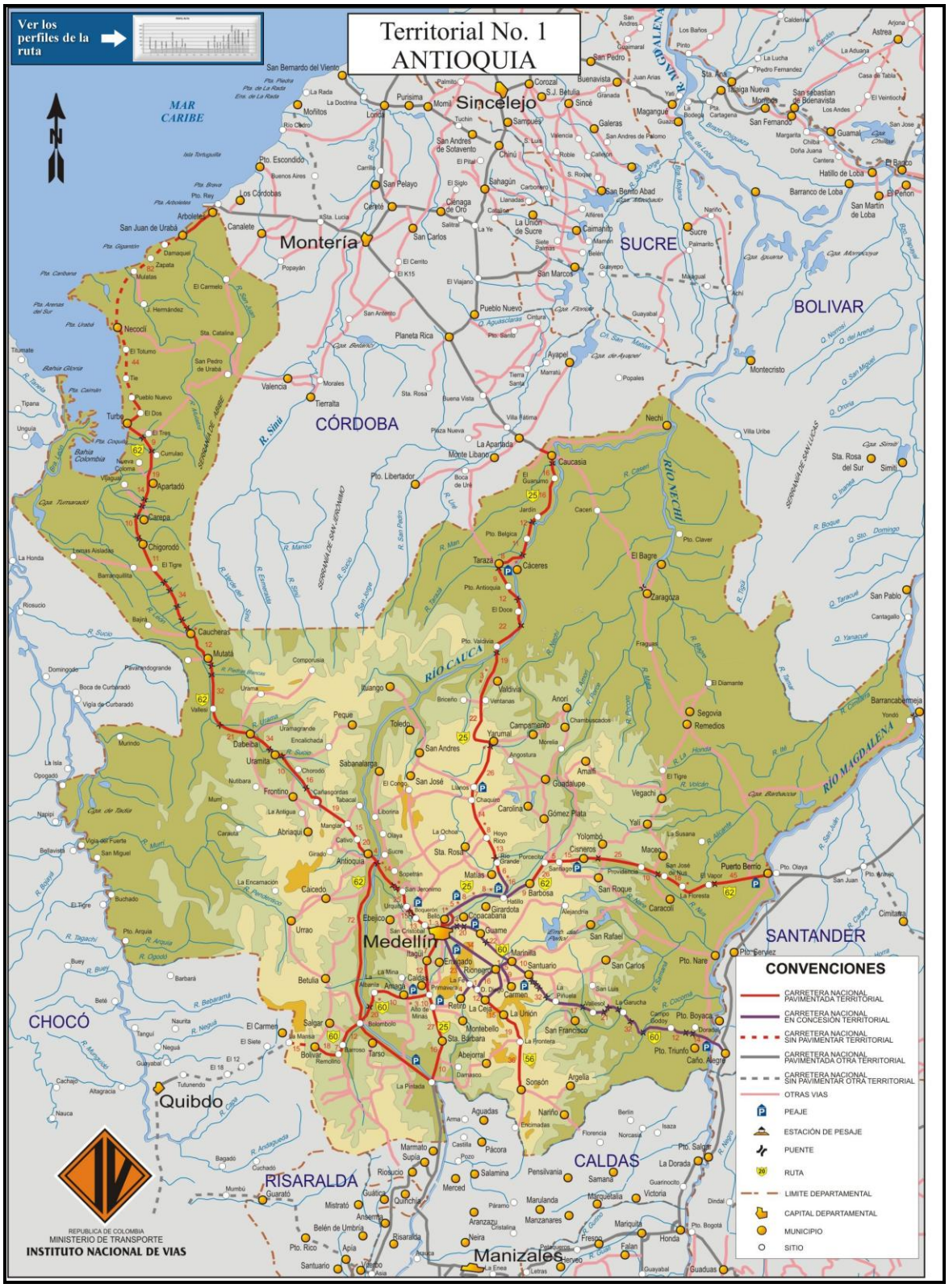


Figure 98: Antioquia roads circa 2006. (Instituto Nacional de Vias 2009). There appears to have been little change in the overall shape and reach of the road network since the late 1940s.

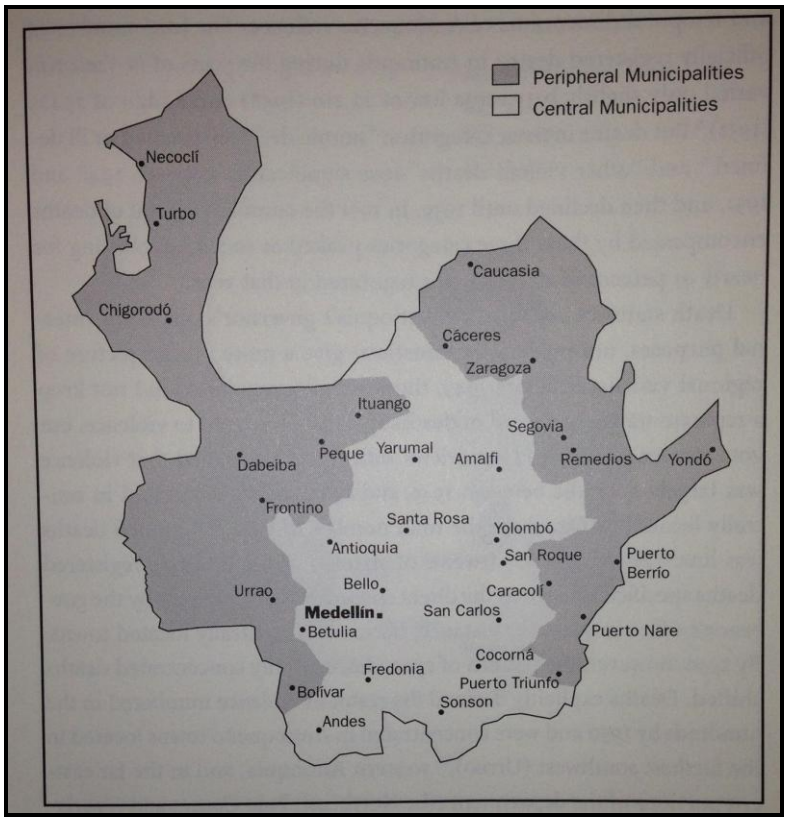


Figure 99: Mary Roldan assertion regarding peripheral (and violent) communities in the 1950s. (Roldan 2002, p.7).

Figure 100: Asessment of FARC order of battle circa 2004. Note the concentration of FARC units around the Paramillo high ground. Towns like Debeiba, Peque, Ituango are vunerable regardless of which war. See figure 86 for the legend.

Arauca

Arauca has been an intermittently contested zone. The Arauca River provides the natural thalweg boundary with Venezuela for over 130 miles, the departmental capital of Arauca along the river in the middle of the department. Arauca department has only seven counties, and has a developed road network owing to its oil fields. As can be seen in figures 35 (p. 128) and 39 (p. 133) Arauca has been a relatively violent department. I ascribe this partly to an international border that has a marked differential in prices of commodities, particularly gasoline and kerosene. An ideological differential has also existed between Colombia and Venezuela for the last decade and a half. In a 1993 book, *Arauca*, the Colombian Section of the Andean Jurists Commission (A regional NGO) asserted the causal nub of Arauca's violence as follows:

> "In synthesis, the phenomenon of political violence in Arauca has been determined in great measure by the struggle for appropriation of oil rents. Disputes by local and departmental administrations and other types of conflicts are also written into the struggle for the control for local political power that carries with it power over the regional economy and thus over the resources derived from petroleum royalties." (Marín 1994 p. 47) (my translation)

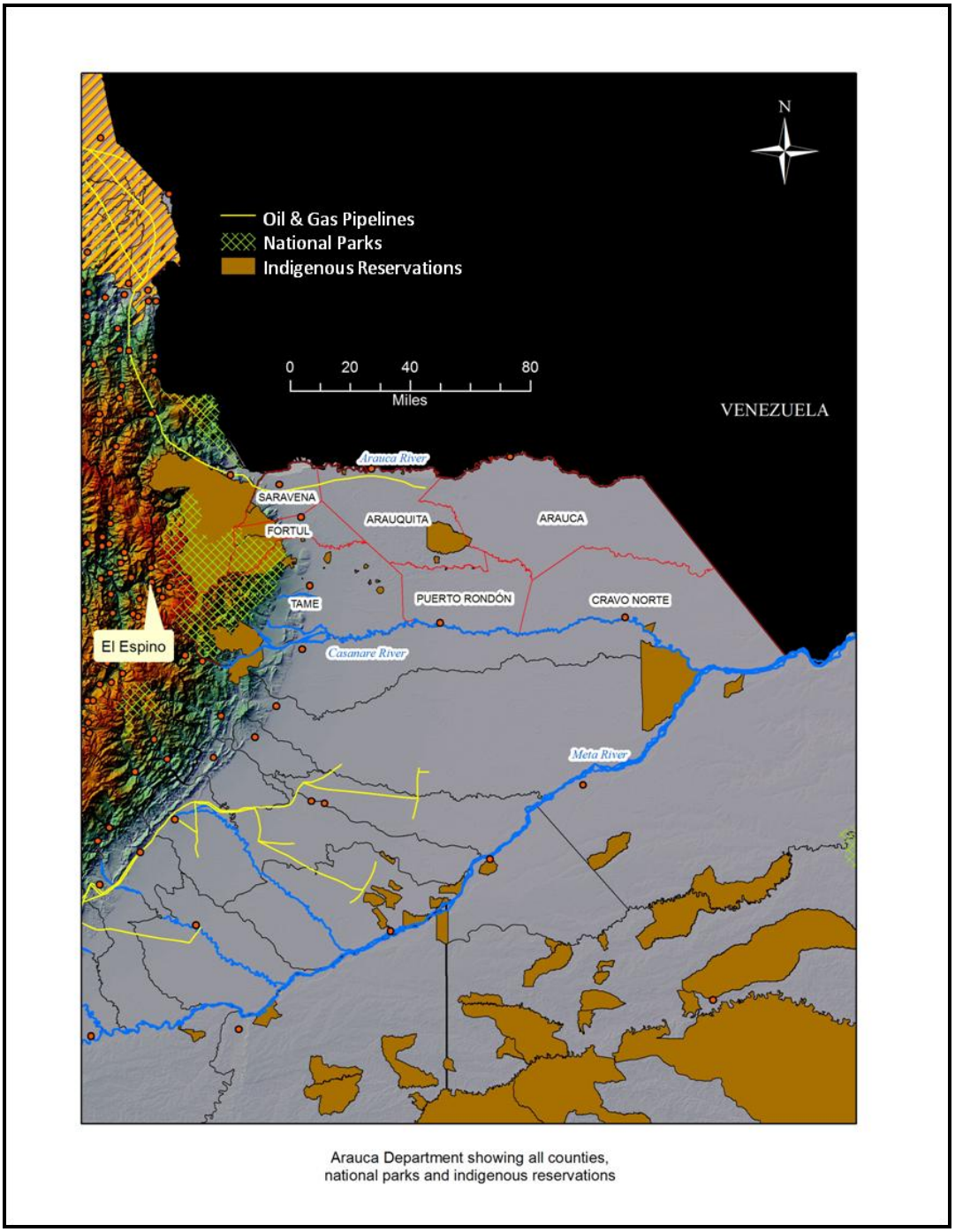
The Jurists Commission was right to highlight oil as a material object of power struggle in the department. Oil is an obvious focal phenomenon. There is oil infrastructure in the Catatumbo where there is also a great deal of violence; likewise *Medio Magdalena*. But Casanare Department produces twice as much oil as Arauca and does not suffer nearly as much violence. Meta Department produces far more oil still, and while there is violence in Meta, it

does not correlate to the oil facilities sufficiently to support the argument. In 1993, coca production in Arauca was minimal, but by 2000 was well established and expanding. Expansion of coca cultivation in Meta and Casanare departments was far less. There is no doubt that for the pirate having commodities at hand is a convenience. What Arauca offers is the imperative – a geography of impunity. From Arauca a person or group that must move under duress is likely to outdistance pursuers. Legal travel by ground from economic centers within Colombia is difficult, whereas contraband distances to and from Venezuela are short. If an ELN or FARC unit were to cross over into Venezuela, Colombian government forces have rarely followed. Even the AUC would find further pursuit too risky.

Control of local and departmental governments would be a significant aid in maintaining a favorable balance of risk distances. Part of the argument against the creation of *zonas de reserva campesina* is that they may be no more than an electoral Trojan horse. In a constant redefining of place identities and collective representation, promoters of the *Zonas* may be seeking to build local electoral majorities in order to gain control of the county administrations.

Arauca, along with Montes de Maria was one of the first areas selected for specific regional developmental attention by the Álvaro Uribe administration after assuming the presidency in 2002. (Figure 46, p. 142) Included as part of these plans (at first called Peace Laboratories) were concessions to major agricultural corporations to help put agriculture on an industrial footing in the area, as well as to increase protection for the hydrocarbon infrastructure. Like the Catatumbo, Arauca's civilian population includes thousands of intermixed families of both Colombian and Venezuelan nationality. Like the Catatumbo, the area features a large national park, El Cocuy. The international boundary, combined with the rugged terrain helps provide fugitives with the needed differential in risk distances during escapes. Helpful, too, are

the ancient social dynamics associated with smuggling and more recently with organizational energies aimed at conditioning democratic processes.



Arauca Department showing all counties, national parks and indigenous reservations

Figure 101: The Arauca conflictive zone. (base data from SIGOT 2013) The red dots are county seats. The red lines are county boundaries in Arauca Department, all north of the Casanare River. This map does not show the road network, but it is well-developed in the lowland, as is seen in figures 23 and 25.

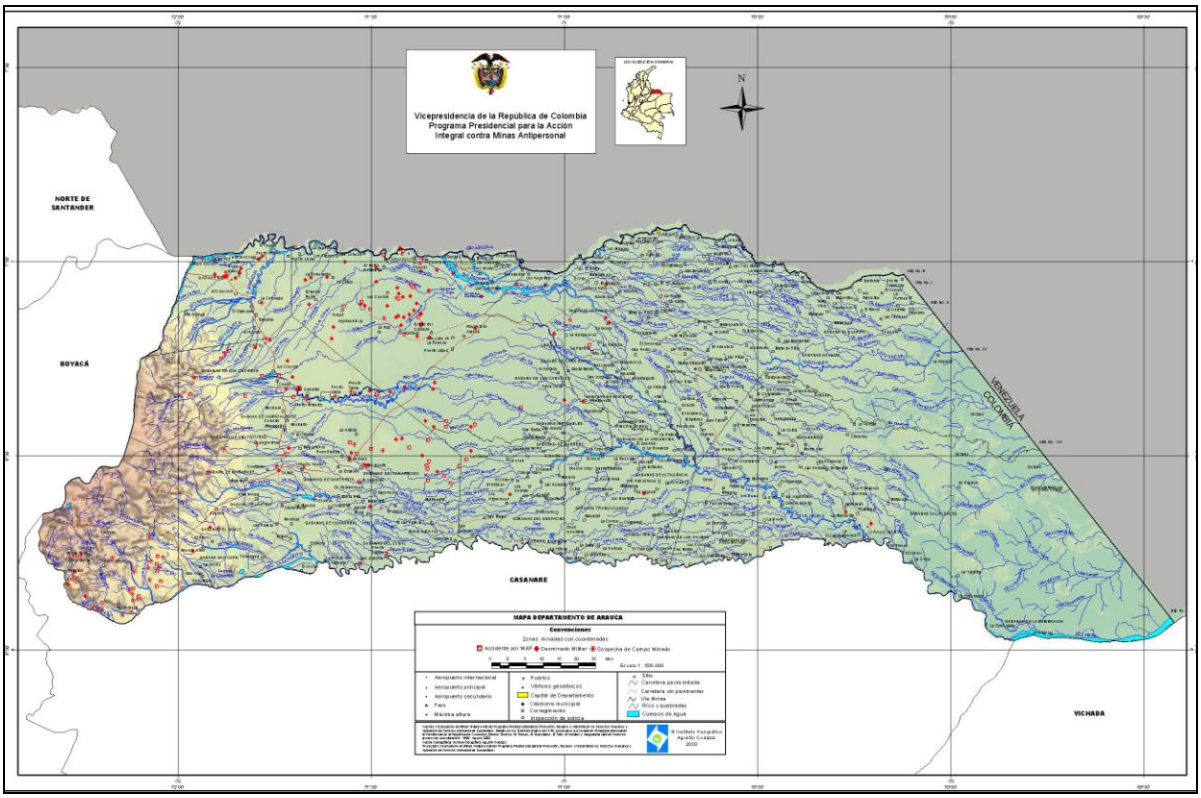


Figure 102: Spatial distribution of landmine phenomena in Arauca Department. (Presidencia de la República 2013) Tame county is to the southwest. The lowland is mostly savanna rather than jungle, and the area enjoys a relatively dense network of passable roads. Although the landmine pattern in Tame County follows the upslope tendency observed in many others of the conflictive areas, note that the landmine phenomena are frequent and spatially dispersed in Arauca. The mines probably reflect how highly contested the area is, the proximity of the international border, and the expansion of coca cultivations. The coca cultivation in Arauca Department is more recent than that in Putumayo by at least a decade. Prior to the election of Hugo Chavez in 1999, Venezuela had not been nearly as hospitable for the FARC. After 1999, Venezuela increasingly served as sanctuary, and Colombian military and counternarcotics analysts universally judge the growth of both coca and landmine cultivation to the change of political circumstances across the international border. Arauca was one of the first priorities for more intensive government activity to challenge the FARC after the assumption of the Colombian Presidency by Alvaro Uribe in 2002.

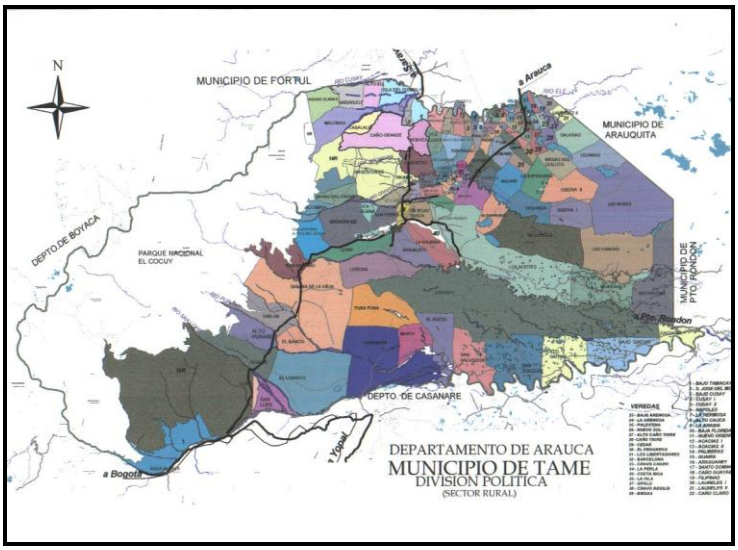


Figure 103: Tame County in Arauca Department. (Alcaldía de Tame-Arauca 2007) Tame County, is currently one of the most conflictive in the country. Not as elongated as Miranda County, Cauca (Figure 60, p. 170), Tame similarly has mountain, piedmont and lowland terrain. It borders on a large national park and is close to the international border with Venezuela. It is close to lucrative economic targets for illegal predation and enterprise (oil and coca). Miranda County and Tame County share most elements in the suite of geographic phenomena that seem to signal a high likelihood that they will be venues of organized violence.

Figure 104: "Route of the Liberators" Highway. Army Engineer map showing cross-Arauca road improvement project circa 2005. (Comando Operativo BR18 2005) The modern highway, like the route of the 19th century Liberators, skirts the Andean high ground where Cocuy National Park is located.

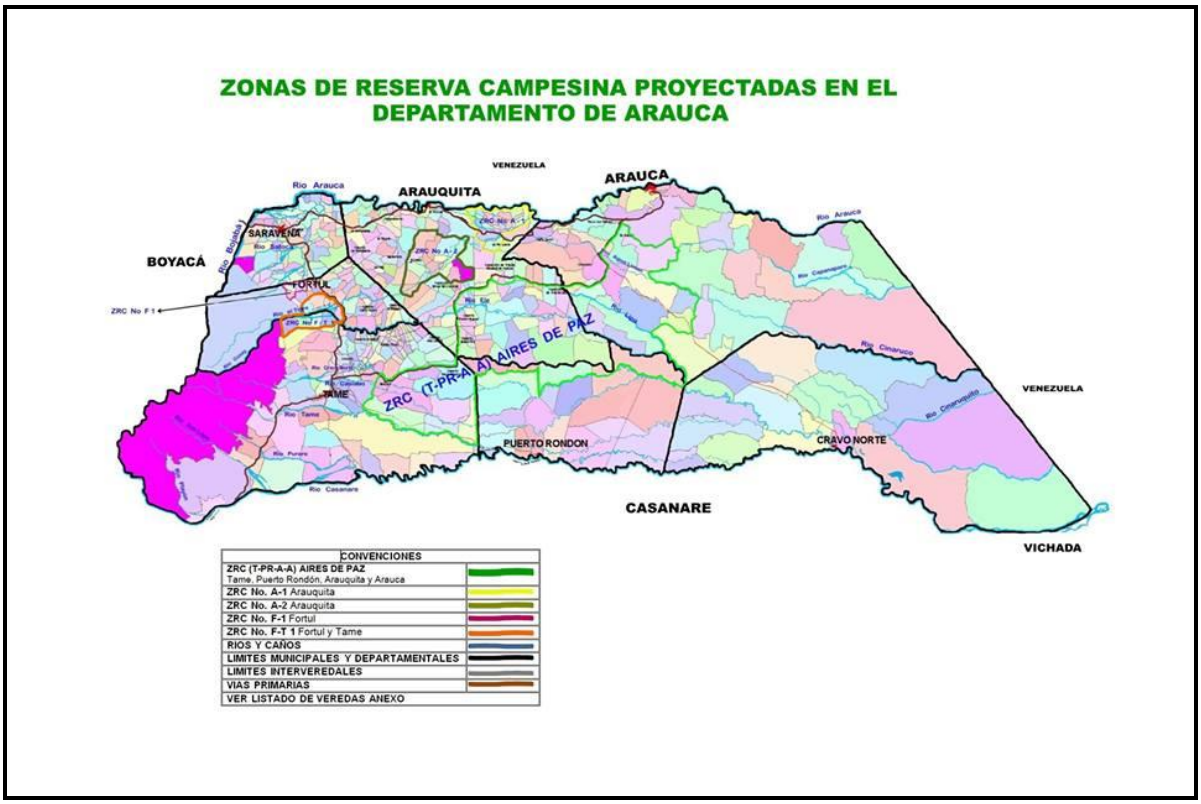


Figure 105: Projected Peasant Reservation Zones in Arauca Department. (Asociación Campesina de Arauca 2013) The county to the far southwest is Tame County. (Figure 103) The large fuscia colored area in Tame County corresponds to part of Cucuy National Park. The pastels in the background of the department map distinguish the various *veredas* (townships), while the first five brighter colors in the legend relate to the various proposed boundaries of five peasant reservation zones. Notably, the boundaries of the proposed zones do not necessarily concord with county or township boundaries.

Comuna 13, Medellín

The spatial experience of violence in Colombia (according to numerous Colombian assertions regarding displacement of persons, locations of landmines, etc.) points to certain areas which are the loci of the war. These loci are, for the most part, remote (as approximately defined by ground travel times) and often rural, although this latter term presents more definitional challenges. Observable patterns and variations exist among the physical geography of the loci. These remote, rural areas include international borders with Venezuela, Panama, and Ecuador. They are often contiguous with National Parks and ecological preservation areas. Some are

close to urban areas and some are not. Many are mountainous, but not all. The fundamental hypothesis, however, does not rest upon or define remoteness or ruralness, or any physical geography, but rather on a concept of distance that looks beyond both Euclidian distances and cost distances, imagining distance in terms of risk. Of particular impact is the differential in risk distances that an armed force confronts when it attempts to impose its will on a (probably weaker) fugitive force. This dynamic of risk distances unfolds in urban areas as well. Some of the same issues of remoteness, the unequal effect of sloping terrain, and of territorial borders seem to apply. Medellín, a modern metropolitan area of over three million people, provides a studied example. While I could as easily have placed the anecdote (around which this exposition is built) in the earlier section on battles, it serves here to represent various urban territories within Colombia, and perhaps elsewhere.

Not many urban battles have occurred in the long Colombian war. The cities have not been kind to the guerrilla movements. There have been brief exceptions to this pattern, and because FARC and ELN leaders longed to surpass their rural identity and possess the cities, they contested some urban and suburban areas. Additionally, while the leftist guerrilla organizations have not long thrived in urban terrain, gangsters have. The major cartels of the eighties and early nineties were the Medellín Cartel and the Cali Cartel. *Comuna 13*, also called San Javier, is a peripheral borough in Medellín. It was the scene in 2002 of Colombia's most publicly followed urban battle, often called Operación Orión (Operation Orion). It is the outstanding example of urban conflict from Colombia and serves, to a degree, as an example in miniature for the complexities of the larger war.

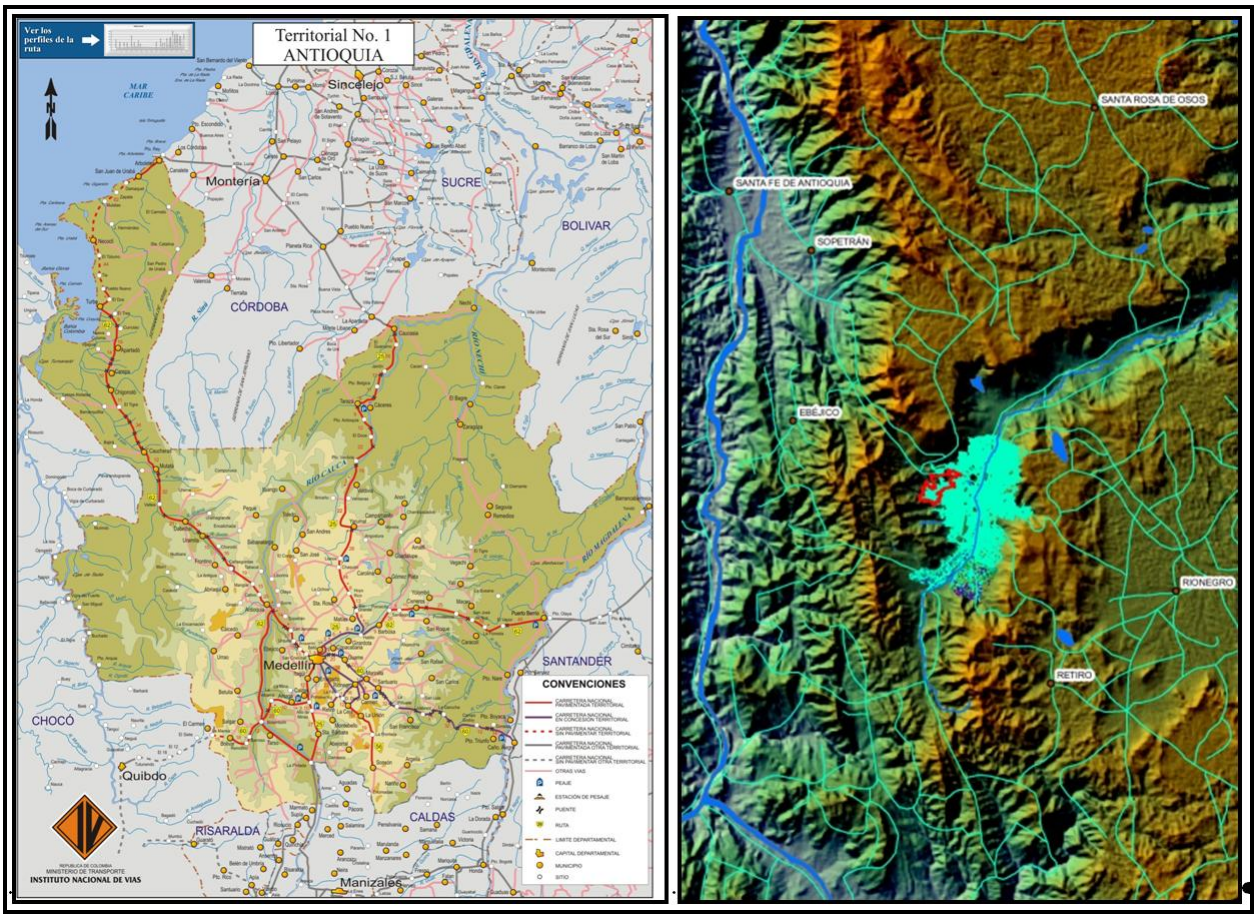


Figure 106: Antioquia map from the National Byways Ministry, (Instituto Nacional de Vias circa 2009); Medellín on elevation model with road network. (Comuna 13 in red; The Cauca River to the west).

Figure 107: Part of Medellín looking northwest toward the north end of San Javier (Comuna 13). (Alcaldía de Medellín 2013).

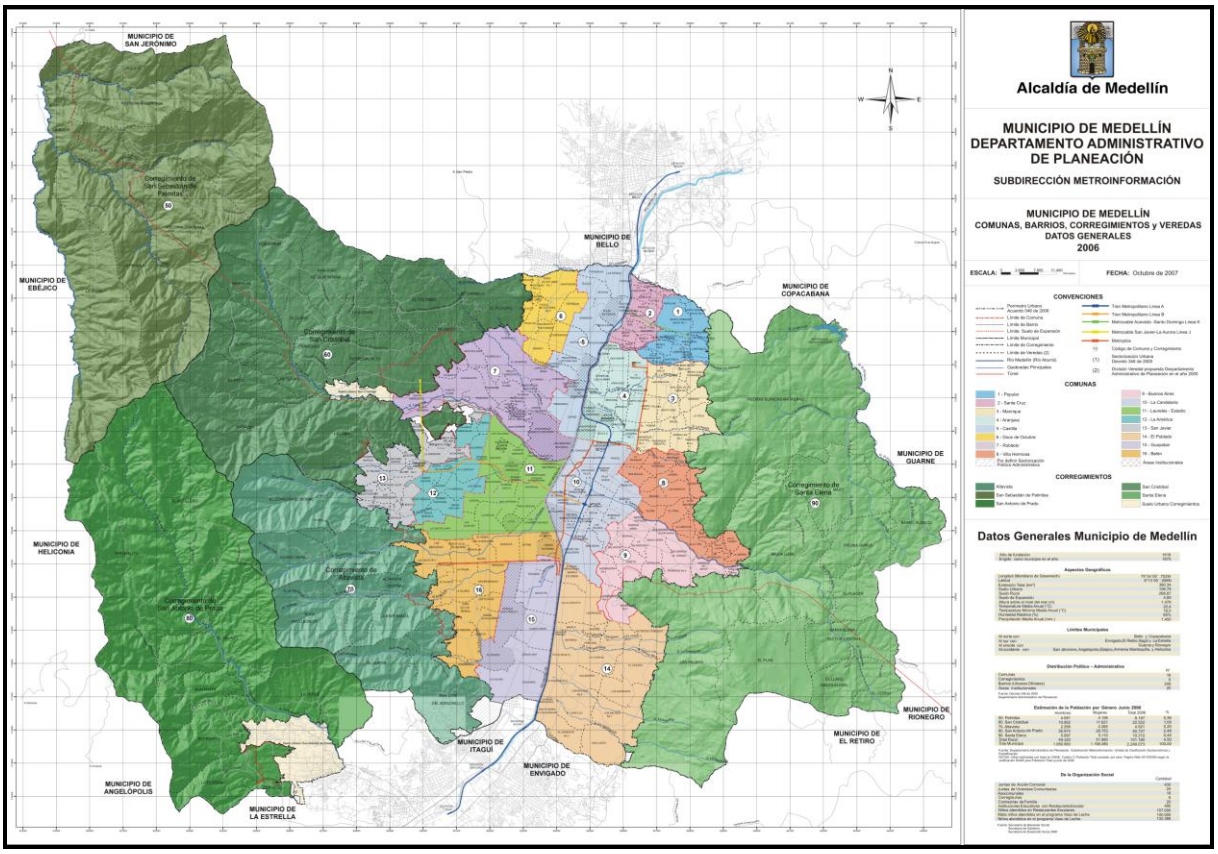


Figure 108: Medellín showing the Comunas and outlying counties governed as part of the metropolitan area. Comuna 13 is in grey to the middle-left. (Alcaldía de Medellín 2007).

Comuna 13 has an area of over seven square kilometers and a population of around a hundred thirty thousand people. Over the years, the borough earned notoriety as an outlaw sanctuary and zone from which criminal and insurgent elements launched predatory raids down into the central thoroughfares of the city. It is only one of several uphill, peripheral boroughs of the greater city and one of, but not the most, violent of these. The Borough sits, however, near or along the western routes into the city, routes that lead to the Gulf of Urabá. The shape of Antioquia Department bespeaks the travel constriction. (Figure 98, p. 265) It is toward Urabá via Santa Fe de Antioquia, Dabeiba, Mutatá, and Chigorodó that *Comuna 13* orients (or, in this case, occidents). The last three of the towns just named are sites of multiple massacres or battles. Although the Antioqueños are slowly developing the land route to Urabá as a major line of licit

commercial communication, it has long been a highway for contraband. (Antioquia conceded the high ground of the Paramillo to Córdoba Department, hence the salient in the political map of Antioquia. Into that highland, smugglers and guerrillas have sought to escape pursuers and establish more secure smuggling routes.) Medellín can be both a destination and bottleneck along the contraband routes, and *Comuna 13* is one of the principal gateways. Several illegal organized groups valued territorial control of the borough as a competitive advantage.

On May 30, 2002, Medellín's mayor, Luis Pérez Gutiérrez and various members of his municipal staff, along with a group of newspersons, determined to take a bus tour of the western hillside borough. A series of police operations had been ineffective in returning the borough to any semblance of control by the city government, a government that in earlier years had ignored the challenge, perhaps considering San Javier peripheral in all ways. A police sweep into the borough a week earlier had left bitterness and bad publicity. The mayor decided to visit the borough, take a sounding, and to show more interest. As they arrived, an unidentified group of armed men immobilized the lead car with gunfire, blocking the way. The adrenalined bus driver managed to back up to safety from the bullet storm. The reports in resident complaints had been understated. For Mayor Pérez it was a frightening experience, but it was also degrading and embarrassing to realize, finally, that an entire sector of his city was completely outside the constituted government's civil authority. *Comuna 13* had fallen outside the *de facto* territorial limits of government control. Outlaws, rebels and gangsters had gained a zone of complete impunity from government authority. For several years, they had been fighting for dominance, mostly among themselves. The population of the zone, many with few economic options, had become terrorized by that fight, effectively enslaved by the various violent groups. Figures 105 through 115 help tell the history, the first several of the map images offered for spatial

orientation. In Figure 110, the pink area to the east was 'owned' by the *Comandos Armados del Pueblo*, CAP, which was a 'rogue' derivative of the FARC. South of the CAP territory was a small area that local gangs had been able to defend against the larger organizations. (Angarita Cañas 2008, p. 291) The large green area to the west had been taken by the AUC, a fact that probably aided government forces in taking back the borough, and also probably allowed AUC leaders to maintain influence afterwards.

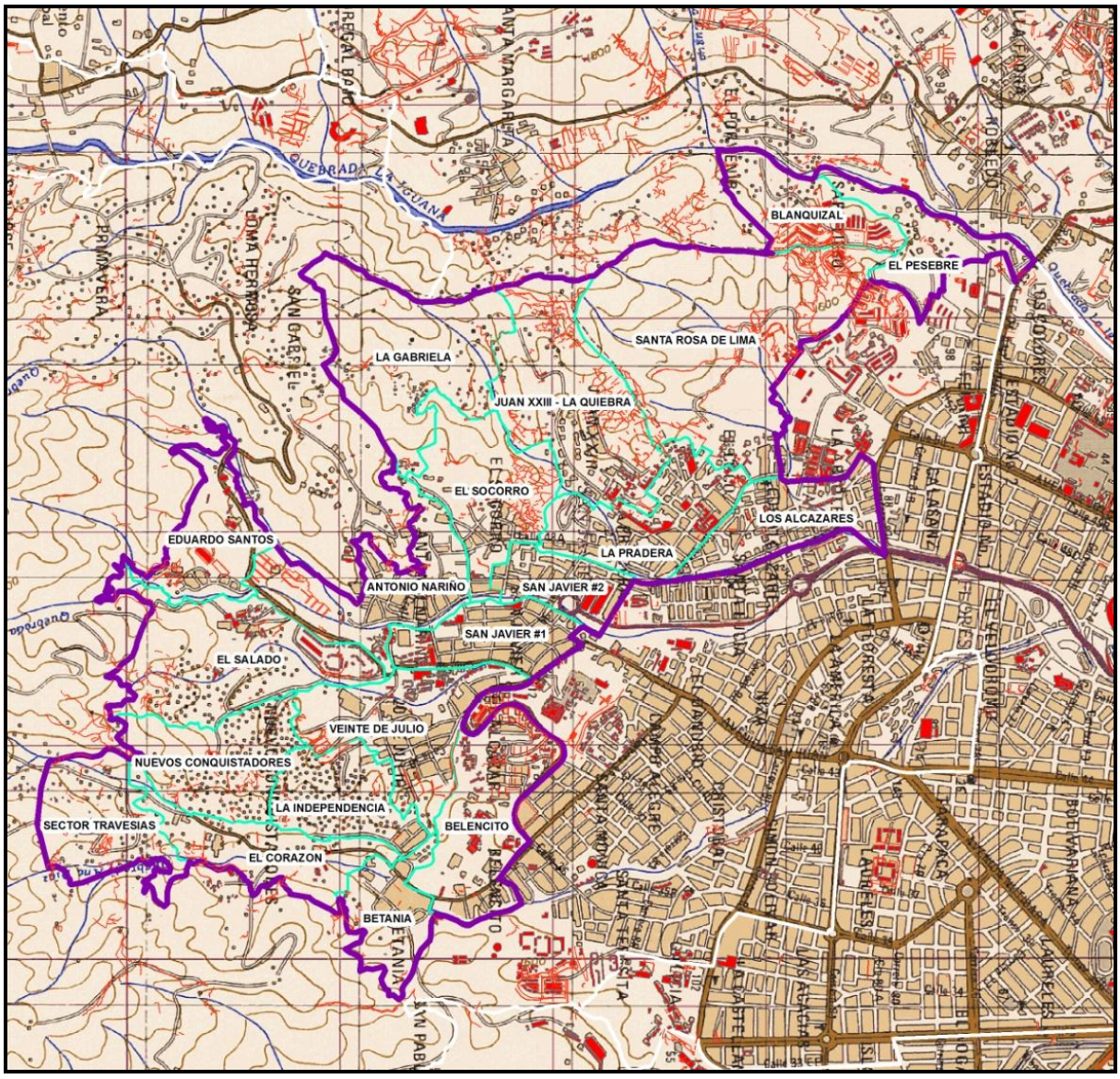


Figure 109: Comuna 13 with its barrios labeld. The base map is of unknown age. The red buildings were constructed after the map was produced and before 2004. The red lines are walking streets, examples of which are shown in Figure 115, p. 286. (GEOSCIRE 2008).

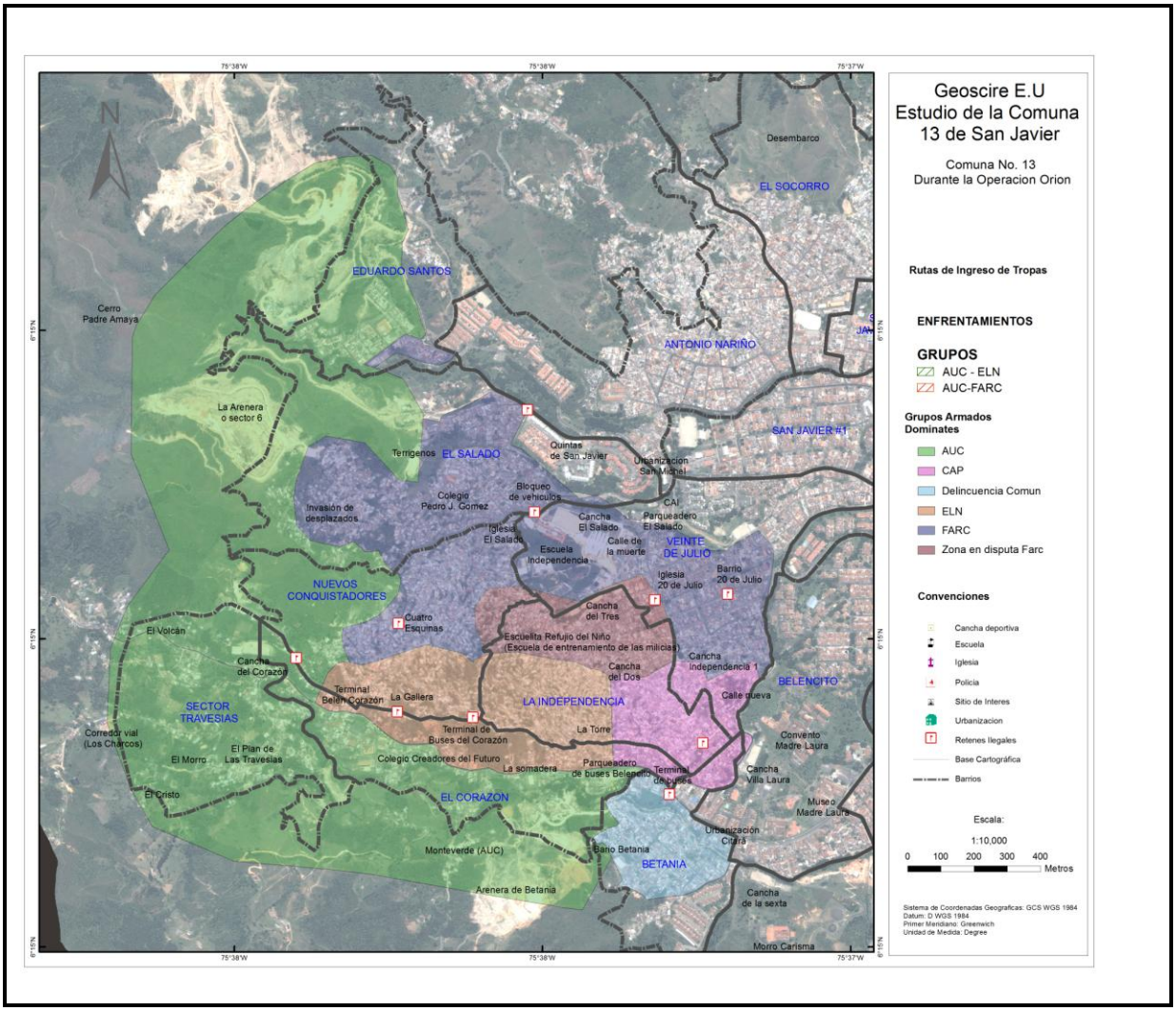


Figure 110: Overlay of Comuna 13 showing territories of illegal armed groups before Operation Orion in 2002. (GEOSCIRE 2007) The green area was dominated by the AUC paramilitaries; the purple in the north part of the borough was dominated by the FARC; the pink area to the east was dominated by the CAP (Armed Command of the People, a FARC splinter); the salmon colored area in the south-center by the ELN; the light-blue to the southeast by local criminal gangs; and the dark red/maroon area in the center/center-east was an area in dispute.

The month before the mayor's bus ride, the Colombian president, Andrés Pastrana, had ordered the Colombian Army to retake the *Despeje*. Pastrana had run for election on a campaign of seeking a negotiated settlement with the insurgents, and he had fulfilled his promise through a series of demarches and concessions. After what seemed to the public and government to be a long, violent series of insincerities on the part of the FARC, President Pastrana reversed course, and ordered the military to retake the *Despeje*.

The end of the peace process led to a changed security dynamic in Medellín. During the years of efforts to maintain cease-fires with the rebel groups, the Pastrana administration had been loath to authorize substantial offensive operations. During the peace process period, the FARC planted units outside Medellín and attempted to create a presence within the city or at least within a few of its peripheral zones, *Comuna 13* in particular. The FARC took active measures during the peace process to improve its geographic positioning, exploiting the depressed pace of government military initiative. When the peace process finally collapsed, the Medellín government sought more aggressive counterinsurgent operations within and around Medellín. Attention and resources from Bogotá, however, were first aimed at retaking the *Despeje*, then to addressing the presence of FARC units nearer to the capital, and toward the upcoming presidential elections. Also, the scale of urban insurgency in Medellin may not have been correctly measured in Bogotá, or even seen as an integral part of larger insurgent strategies. At any rate, Mayor Pérez would not find a responsive ear in Bogotá until after the inauguration of Álvaro Uribe, a fellow Antioqueño.

On May 21st, 2002, that is, a week before Mayor Pérez' rejected attempt to visit the borough, about seven hundred police officers and soldiers implemented a last assault that was part of what was called Operation Mariscal, descending more or less simultaneously (*ascending*, actually, since the borough is almost all hillside) on residential addresses in the borough. The objective was to issue outstanding warrants to members of the various armed groups and to interdict what government intelligence warned might be an organized attempt to disrupt the presidential elections scheduled for May 26. Operation Mariscal met organized resistance, indicating to the public forces how thoroughly infested the borough had become. It also exposed some weakness in government operational practices. Three children were killed and 31 other

civilians wounded. The operation had little effect on territorial control of the borough, much less on living conditions within it.

Álvaro Uribe Vélez won the May 26 presidential elections by a large margin. He had campaigned on a platform of toughness against the various insurgent enemies of the State, especially the FARC. Colombian voters not only rejected the failed Pastrana 'peace process,' they were attracted to the idea of beating the FARC definitively. Uribe's inauguration in early August marked not only a sharp turn in national military strategy, but also a change of fortunes for *Comuna 13*.

Medellín as a whole was returning to hyper-violence. During some days as many as twenty-five murders occurred. (Figure 112) The city suffered over two thousand murders in the first half of 2002. (GEOCIRE 2008) The violence actually never deteriorated to the levels suffered during the early 1990s, before Pablo Escobar was killed, but the people of Medellín had every reason to fear it might.

On October 14, during a spike in inter-gang violence in *Comuna 13*, a stray bullet entered an apartment in an adjacent sector of the city, killing the beautiful only daughter of one of the mayor's friends, a prominent doctor. At the wake, the mayor was not only moved by the total deflation of his friend, but by the parallel depression of a third man, whose college-age son had suffered the same fate. The war had reached the heart of an otherwise oblivious elite. Calculating correctly that the city itself did not have the resources to deal with the problem at the appropriate scale, Mayor Pérez called the new president on the phone, and asked for help with *Comuna 13*. President Uribe ordered the head of the chief of the armed forces to take back the borough.

Figure 111: View from Comuna 13 to the North.

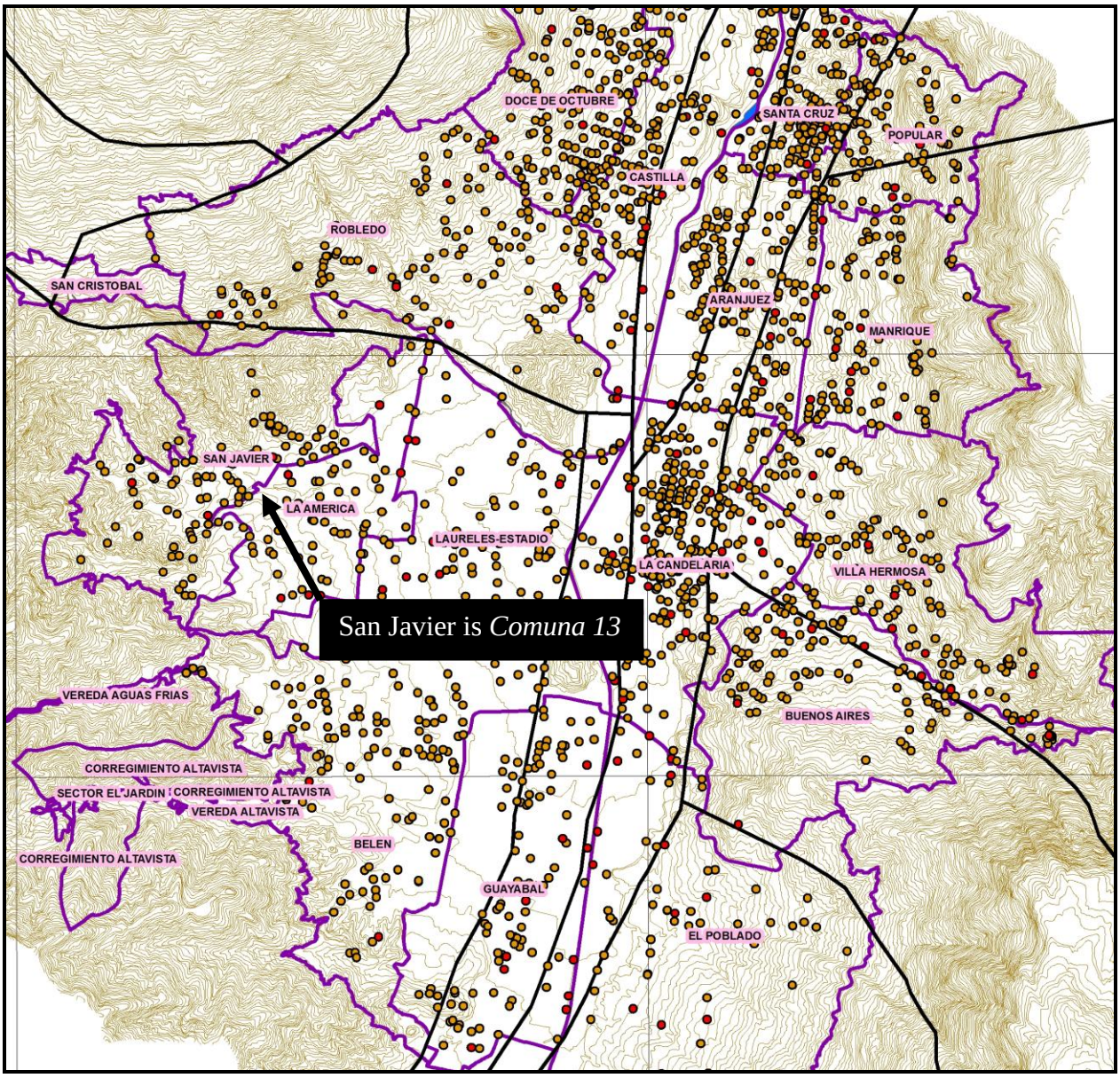


Figure 112: Murders in Medellín 2001, 2002. Some dots are multiple murder locations. Linear dot patterns seen in some areas owe to street-corner geo-referencing of bodies found on that block. The police classified the red dots as murders associated with terrorism, which might mean that the police confirmed those deaths as attributable to the FARC or ELN. (GEOSCIRE 2007) The black lines are major thoroughfares. Comuna 13 is also called San Javier, located to the middle-left. La Candelaria is a relatively prosperous part of town. The concentration of murders in Candelaria and Aranjuez reflects predation (mostly armed robbery and kidnapping attempts). The deaths in Doce de Octubre, Catilla, and Santa Cruz and San Javier boroughs to the north are more likely associated with gang-on-gang confrontations.

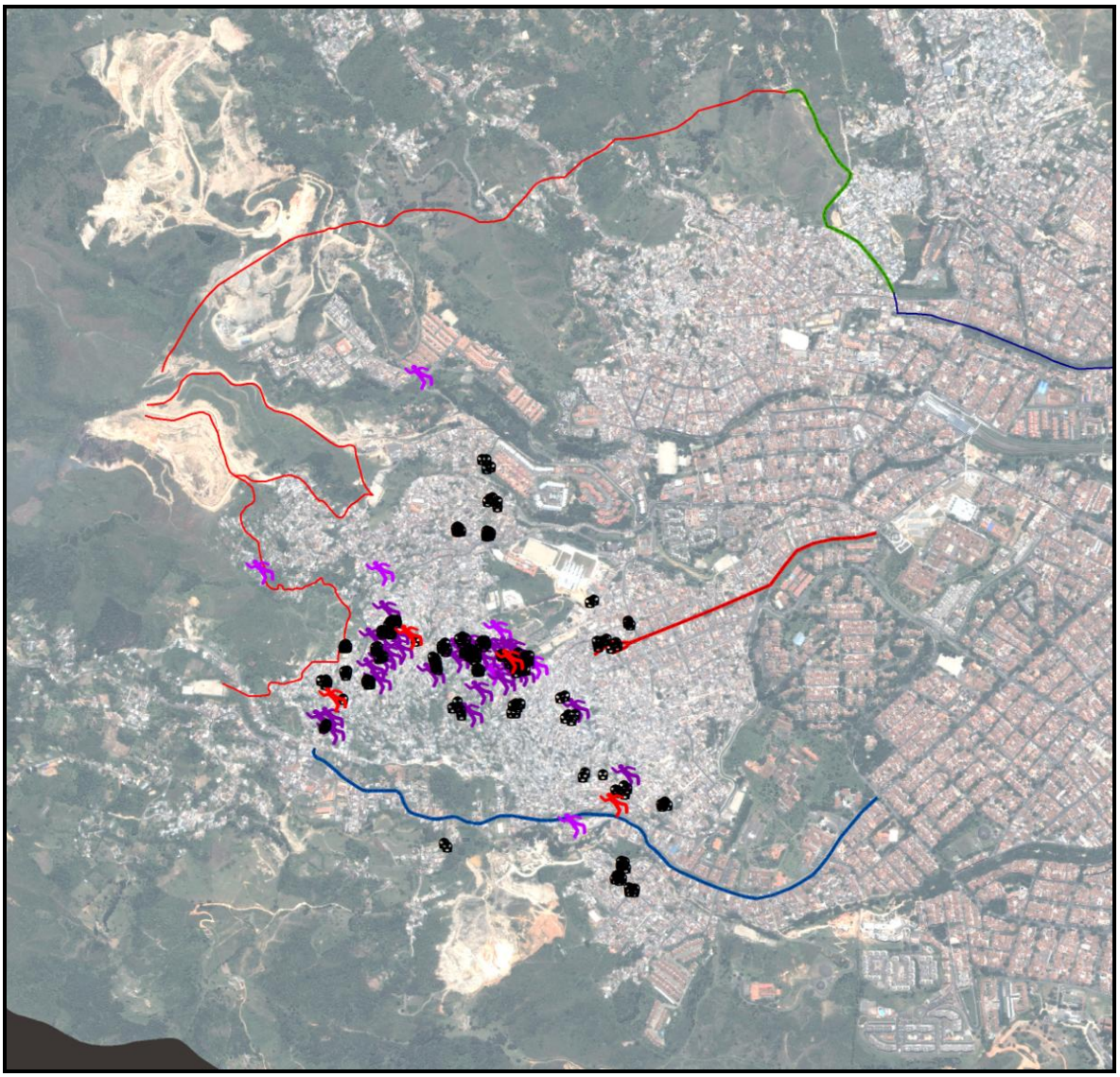


Figure 113: Operation Orion: routes of approach into Comuna 13 (red = Army, blue = Police; captures are in black, red are killed policemen, and purple are killed civilians. (GEOSCIRE 2007).

On October 16, 2002, a joint force of Colombian army, national police, Medellín police and other government agencies surrounded and entered the borough to serve arrest warrants. This 'Operation Orion,' the shooting part of which lasted only twenty-four hours, resulted in about four hundred detentions. The police could not serve all the warrants, the government forces suffered several casualties, and more civilians were killed. It did not bring economic

prosperity or eliminate desperation in the lives of many of the borough's residents. It was a successful counterinsurgent event nonetheless. On Tuesday, October 21, Mayor Pérez again loaded up his cabinet and a bunch of media people and headed for *Comuna 13*. This time he went to the middle of the borough, led a public prayer, raised the national flag, and took a long march up and down the borough's labyrinth of stairway streets. The crowds cheered, flew flags, did no shooting - there was no mistaking that a change had occurred.

Operation Orion was different from its predecessors. Previous operations had failed to create a permanent government presence. Government units went in to serve warrants based on good information about suspects, but not about the overall operational options of the enemies they faced. They approached the problem as police, without visualizing the flow of movement in and out of the borough, nor had they planned to address the relationship between the enemy and the population. They had not assembled sufficient resources to remain with sufficient power to address that relationship -- especially to change the nature of the competition for information. Although the authorities had always hoped to enter and stay, they had never assigned enough personnel even to protect the police officers themselves. The police were never as present as the guerillas and gangsters. In fact, before Operation Orion, almost all of a policeman's energies inside *Comuna 13* were consumed trying to stay alive. The various illegal groups had Balkanized the borough, and in a patchwork of tiny sovereignties had created a geography of impunity. For an agent of the state, just entering the borough meant exceeding the risk distance.

Figure 114: Police Station built in Comuna 13 after Operation Orion in 2002.

Figure 115: “Walking Streets” in Comuna 13 Medellín circa 2008.

The various assaults launched as Operation Mariscal revealed themselves as iterations of a failing method. In each assault into the borough, the police would chase their foe uphill and into the countryside, but fail to pursue. They could not, for lack of resources. Finally, an army sergeant with an integral view of the problem laid out to the senior leaders what to do. The authorities had to seal off the zone, make arrests, and then stay with sufficient force that they could take a careful inventory and create conditions in which the residents were confident that they could talk to the police. It would then be easier to determine who was out-of-place and who was a resident. The city started a number of significant infrastructure projects, erected police stations and military posts inside the borough, and invested in methods of community organization. They had to overcome not just the physical presence of the illegal armed groups, but their incorporeal presence as well. The city government set up ways to assure anonymity to informants, especially women. Operation Orion did not eliminate organized crime in the borough. It may even have opened space to allow one of the illegal armed groups to take over most of the illicit trade. Nevertheless, the city's leadership had listened to a modest individual who understood two general categories of life – that of poor citizens in a peripheral community, and that of fugitives. On October 16, 2002, a one one-day operation changed the geography of impunity in an urban borough in what was one of the most violent cities in the world.

Magdalena Medio

Barrancabermeja is a city of over 300,000 people in Santander Department along the middle reaches of the Magdalena River. Colombians refer to the entire area by the name of this prominent city, by its mountain range as the *Serranía de San Lucas*, or after the river as the *Middle Magdalena*. (figures 118 and 119) An an early ferry location between Antioquia and the eastern departments of Santander, Santander del Norte and the country of Venezuela,

Barrancabermeja became the location of the country's first oil refinery, built as a concession requirement in the early 1920s by the Tropical Oil Company. Over time, it became the crossroads of oil pipelines, the national highway, railway and the river. If one were asked to select a single spot on the map of Colombia that might be considered strategically most important as to transportation and national economic well-being, Barrancabermeja would offer an excellent argument. From the official Yondó county website we learn the following: "Yondó will shine nationally as the axis county of regional development along the west bank of the Magdalena River; efficient in its use of natural resources and with an optimal distribution of land-use, achieving a sustainable development." It does not appear to be a far-fetched aspiration. As far as licit transport is concerned, the region is as much a natural geographic hub as exists in Colombia. In that sense it is exactly not the Nevado del Huila. But Barrancabermeja is not just a hub of licit economic activity. What in the first decade of the twentieth century had been just another crossing spot on the Magdalena River became the center of competition over both clandestine traffic and several forms of licit wealth.

> "In the Middle Magdalena a world at the margins of the State was constructed. ...in this forgotten place, of fortune tellers, woodsmen, fishermen, and quinine pickers, one day they woke up to the news that the dirt they walked upon carried inside it a great fortune that would become the economic engine of the country. ...Barrancabermeja did not hesitate to convert itself into a key petroleum economic center and; soon seeing itself wrapped up in processes of urbanization, a wave of immigarants from the rest of the country arrived to give a new face to the old port of Santander. ...Due to its strategic location, which includes direct access to the most important river in the country, it was the first city under the

> absolute dominion of subversives, from whom (the armed left of the FARC, ELN and EPL; the sindicalists and social organizations) the self-defense forces (AUC) wrested the military, political, and social pulse. ... As several authors have written, it was, moreover, the first place in our territory where an urban war between guerrillas and self defense forces was unleashed." (González and Jiménez 2008, pp. 48, 49)

Figure 116 shows the nearby coca crop, and the Serrania de San Lucas is a source for mineral commodities, many of which are exploited illegally. Mountains on either side of the Magdalena valley offer close-by contraband-friendly geography. In 2000, the ELN asserted that President Pastrana had agreed to give that guerrilla group control over an area of national territory, (similar in purpose to the *Despeje*, given to the FARC) as a goodwill gesture and compromise for the furtherance of peace talks. (Corporación Observatorio Para la Paz 2001, p. 235) The ELN outlined what they considered to be a suitable area contiguous with the counties of Cantagallo, Bolivar; San Pablo in Bolivar Department; and part of Yondó, Antioquia (Figure 120). Those three counties form the west bank of the Magdalena River. Militarily, control of those counties would greatly facilitate predation against various lines of licit communication and almost all licit economic movement through the area. President Pastrana personally favored the idea. But for intervening events, he would have conceded those counties to the ELN. The AUC, however, probably with the acquiescence if not active support of part of the Colombian Army, clashed frontally with the ELN, including directly in the city of Barrancabermeja. One of the more famous massacres in Colombia occurred in May of 1998, when the AUC killed at least thirty-five young men to demonstrate their presence. (González 2008) The AUC was also able to organize peasant strikes and demonstrations against the concession of the area to the ELN, a

phenomenon that took both the ELN and the Pastrana administration by surprise. While the AUC confronted the ELN, government negotiations with the FARC soured. Álvaro Uribe's election in 2002 seemed to cease all possibility that the government would make a territorial concession to the guerrillas. Still, as Figures 119 and 120 attest, the guerrillas may yet win at least a partial victory in the form of the *zona de reserva campesina*.

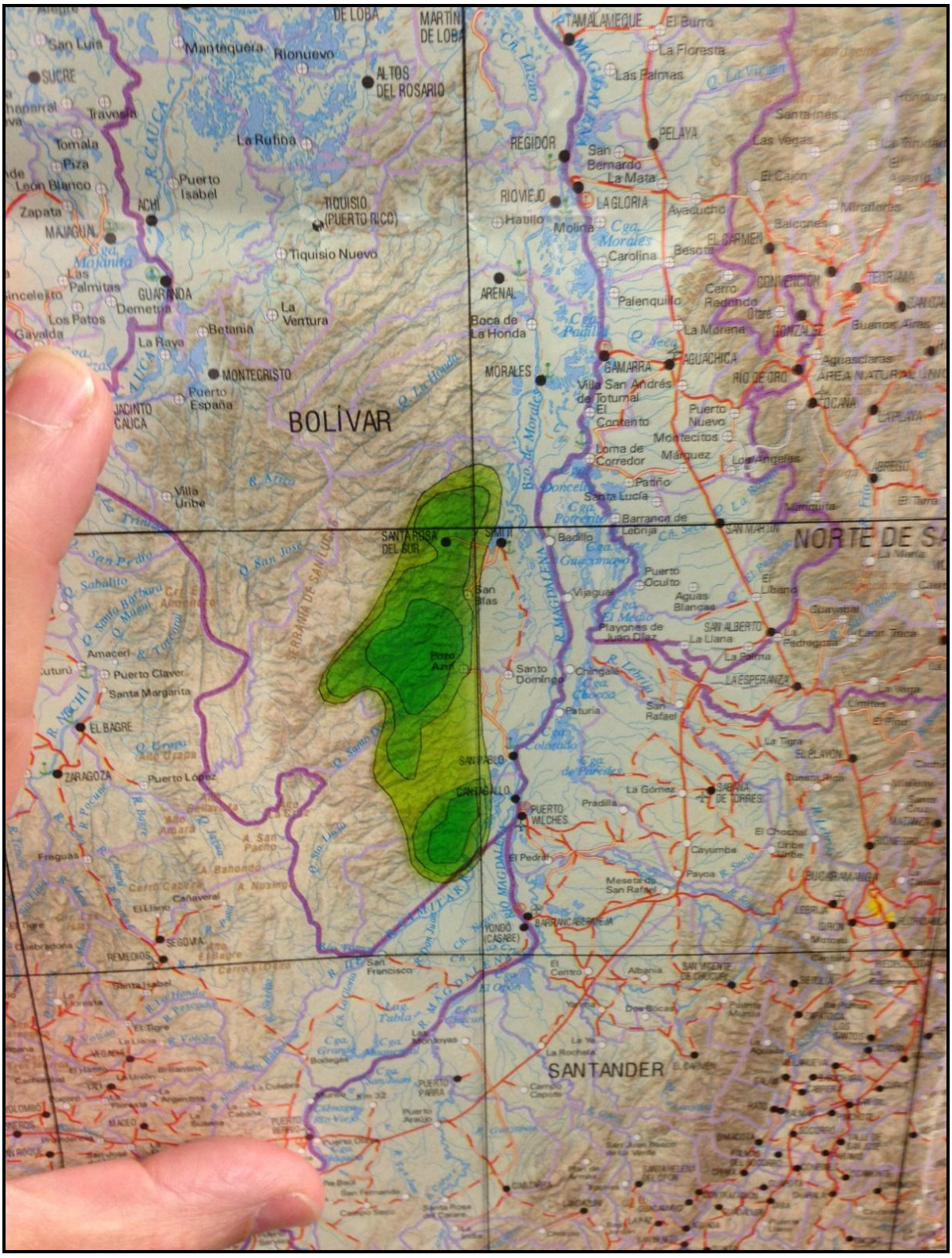


Figure 116: Coca cultivation 'blobology' (government jargon for the methodology for determining illicit cultivation extents and their depiction) for the area of southern Boliver Department.

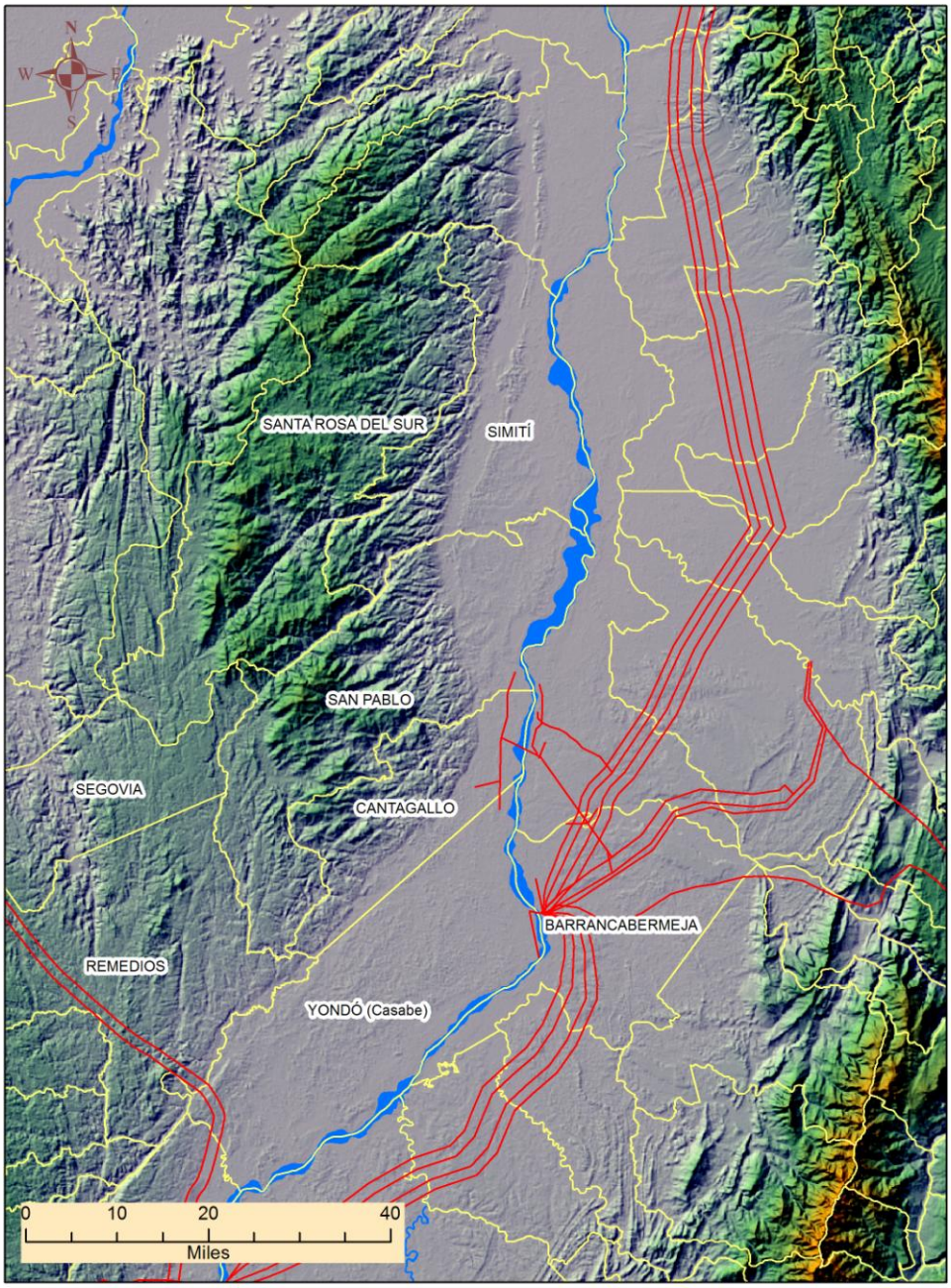


Figure 117: Magdalena Medio. (Middle Reaches of the Magdalena River) Yellow lines are county boundaries. (using ArcGIS with base data from SIGOT 2013).

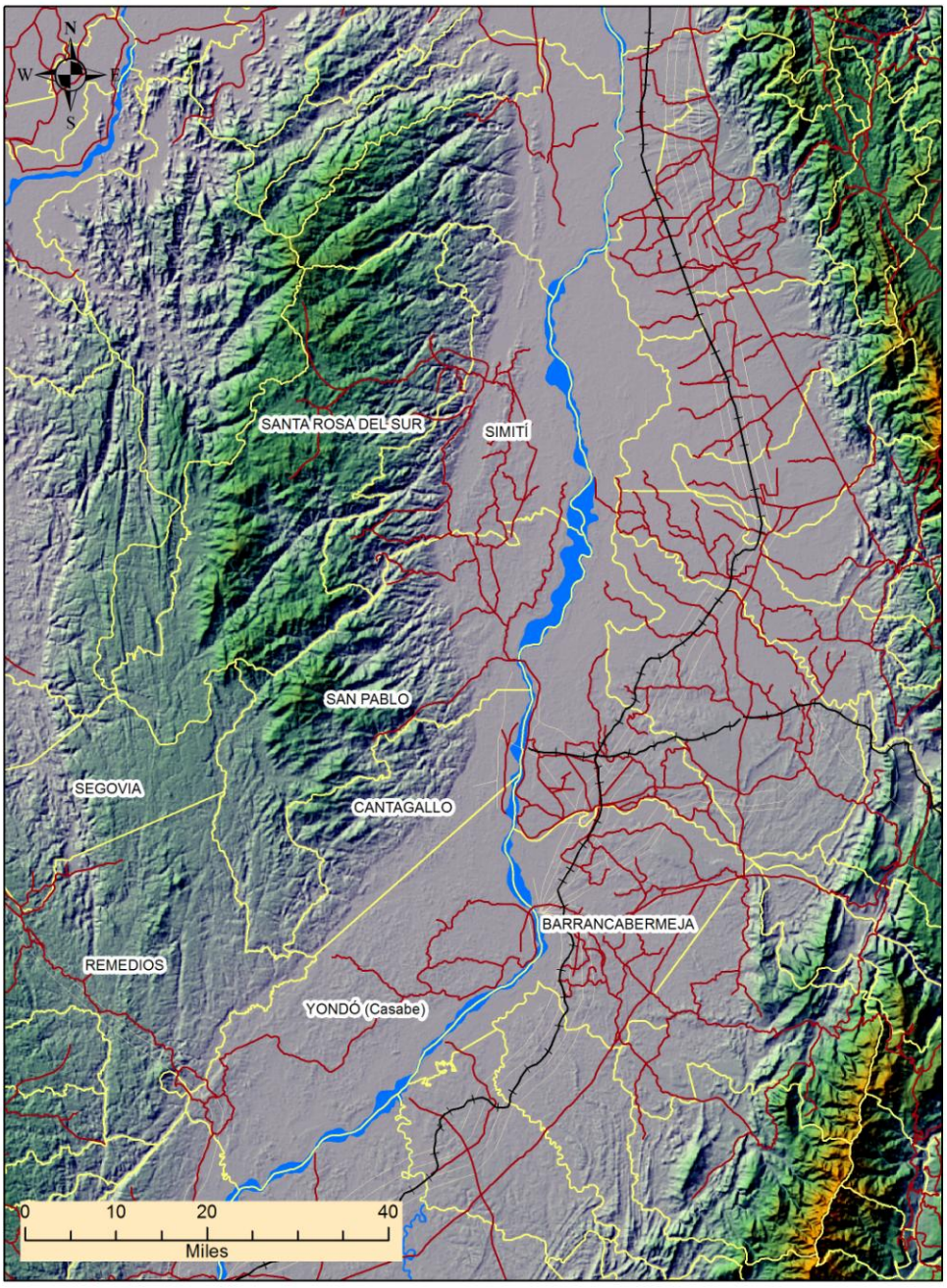


Figure 118: The Magdalena Medio. (Middle Reaches of the Magdalena River) Yellow lines are county boundaries. (using ArcGIS with base data from SIGOT 2013).

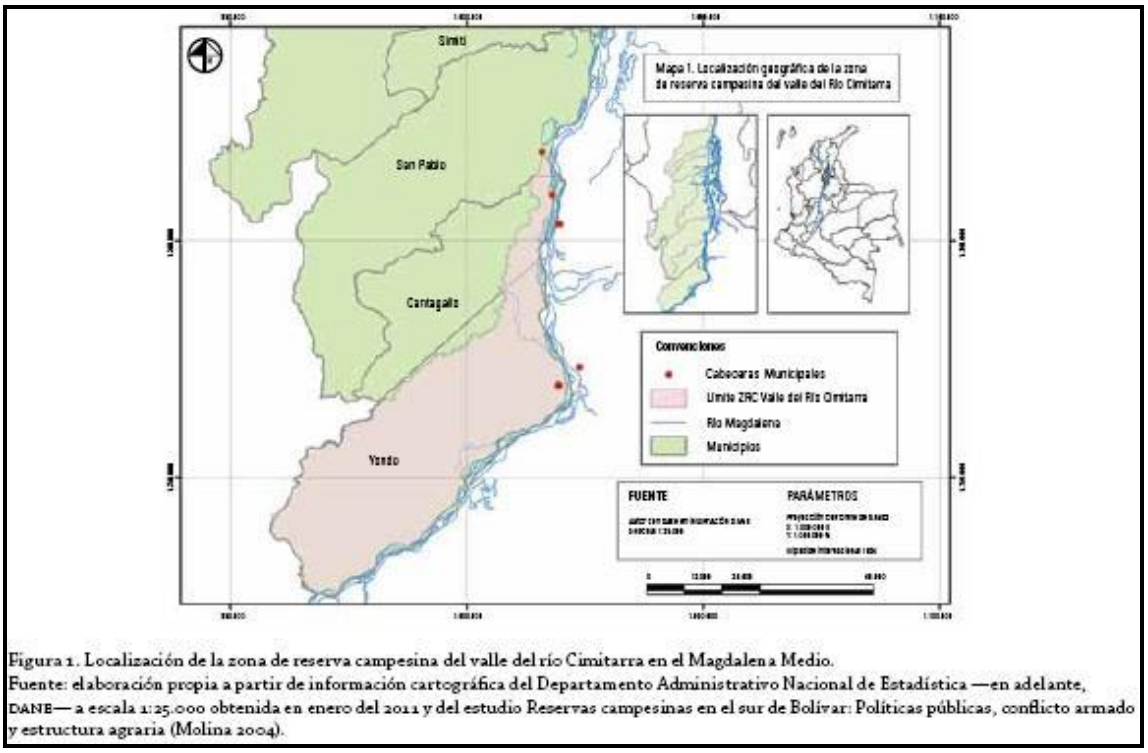


Figura 1. Localización de la zona de reserva campesina del valle del río Cimitarra en el Magdalena Medio.
Fuente: elaboración propia a partir de información cartográfica del Departamento Administrativo Nacional de Estadística —en adelante, DANE— a escala 1:25.000 obtenida en enero del 2011 y del estudio Reservas campesinas en el sur de Bolívar: Políticas públicas, conflicto armado y estructura agraria (Molina 2004).

Figure 119: Planning for peasant reservation zones. (Molina, Andrés Leonardo 2011).

Figure 120: Planning for peasant reservation zones. (Subgerencia de tierras rurales 2012).

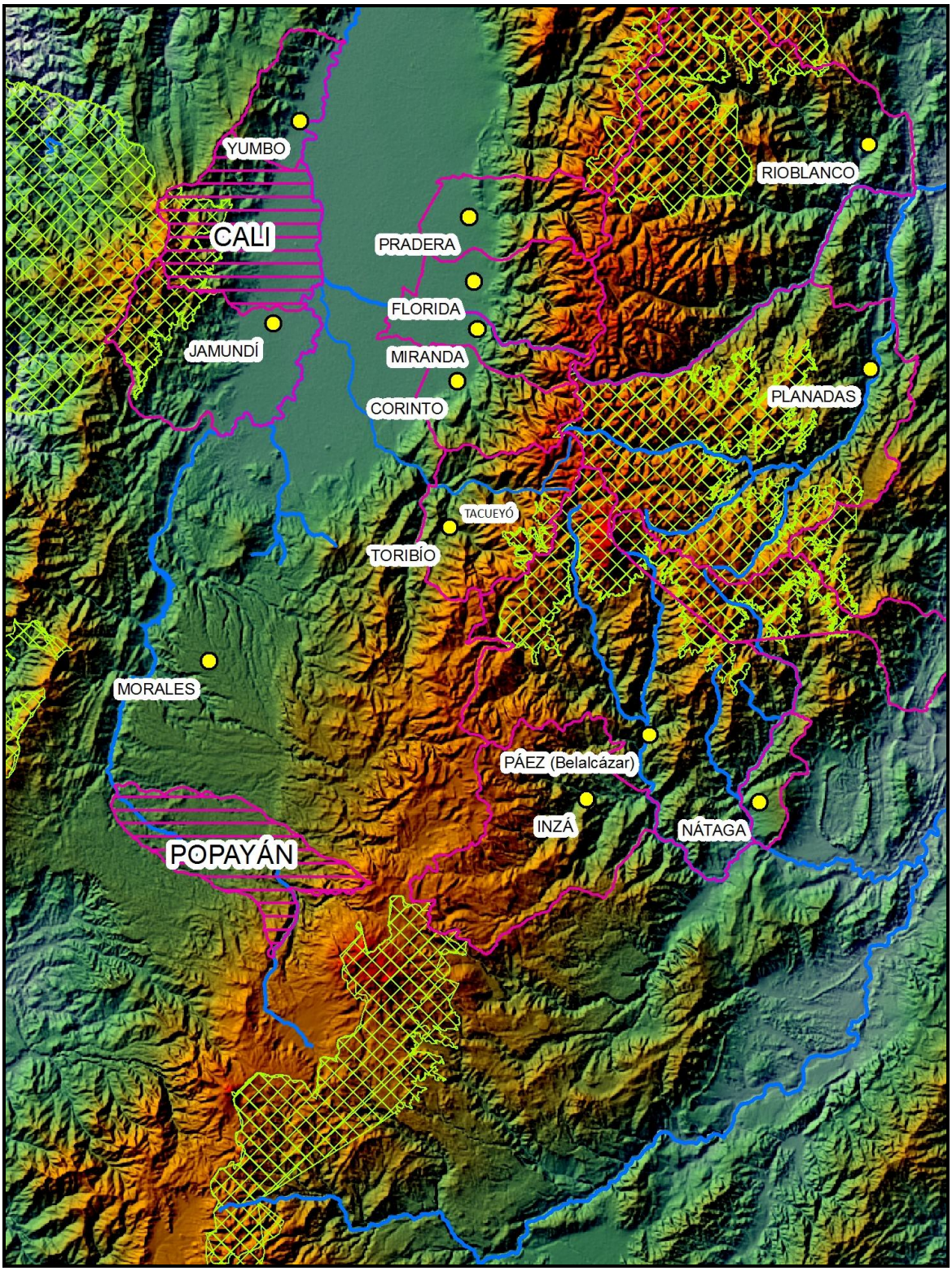


Figure 121: Nevado del Huila area highlighting Yumbo, Inzá, Tacueyó, and Jamundí.

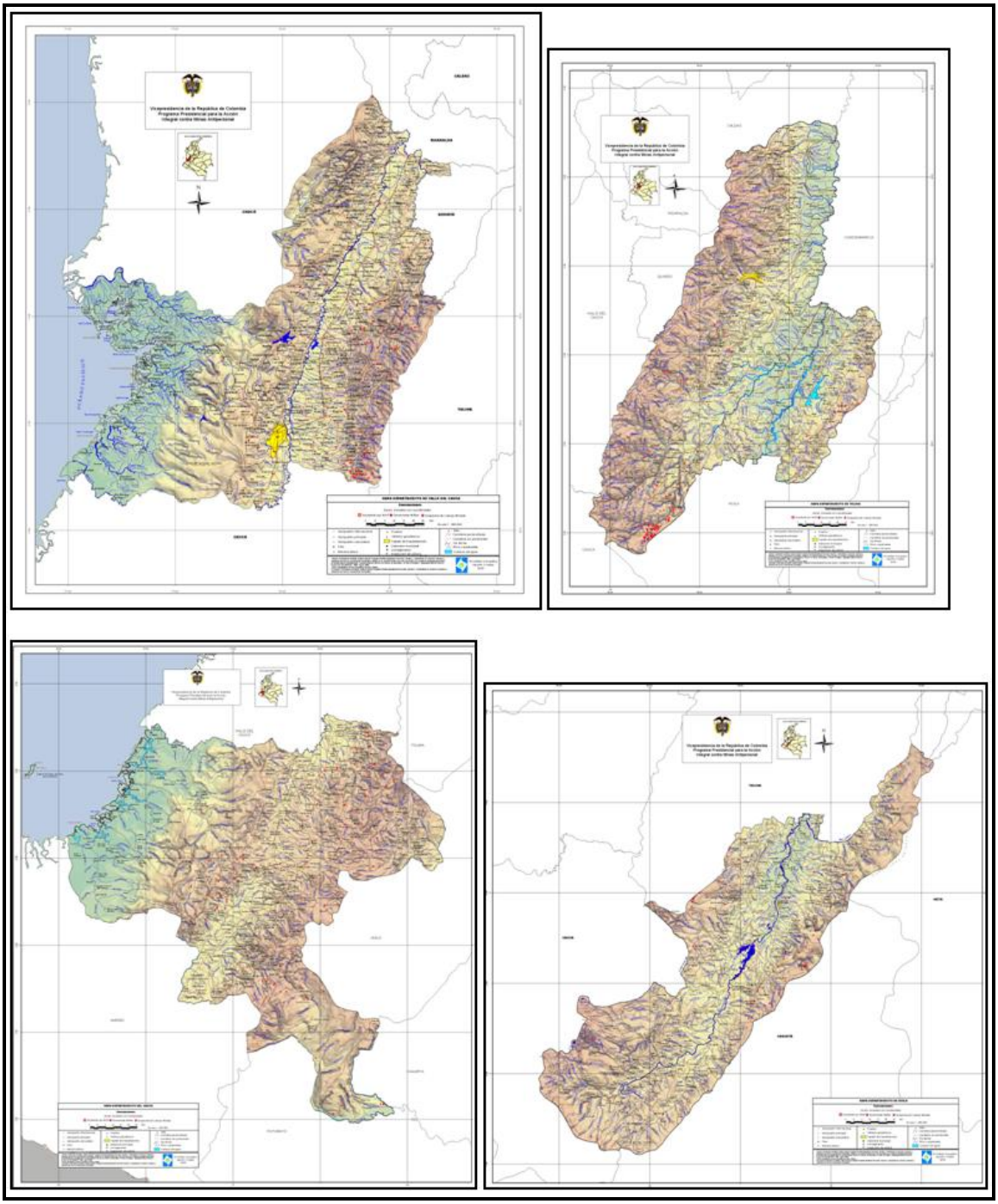


Figure 122: Spatial distribution of landmine phenomena in the Nevado del Huila area. (Presidencia de la República 2013) From this juxtaposition of the Departmental landmine maps one can discern the strong correlation of landmine phenomena to upslopes. Note, for instance, the concentrations of landmine phenomena in southeastern Valle del Cauca Department (upper left) and in southeastern Tolima Department (upper right). Almost all of these mines were left behind by FARC guerrillas when being pursued uphill by government units.

Nevado del Huila

> "Last Sunday Eighth of November history changed and the FARC finally was able to re-take El Davis ranch, which almost thirty-two years ago was the home of the Campesina Self Defense, which would later give rise to the FARC, which also left some years later for El Pato, Guayabero and Río Chiquito...." (*El Tiempo*, November, 1998) (my translation)

Of the zones discussed, the region distinguished by the volcanic peak Nevado del Huila is most revealing regarding the nature of Colombia's warring and for the theoretical proposition of this dissertation. The home of the precursors to and birthplace of the FARC, it was the scenario of the manhunt against FARC leader Luis Devia in late 2011. The Colombian Geographic Institute, responding to inter-institutional priorities, chose Cauca as a regional study pilot for its public GIS website. (SIGOT 2013) If one were asked to put their finger on a place on the map of Colombia that represented the center of contraband transportation and the economic well-being of illicit enterprises, the Nevado del Huila volcano would offer an excellent argument, even while there are many others within Colombia. The Nevado de Huila, where the departments of Huila, Cauca, Valle del Cauca and Tolima meet, is the rightful center of Colombian contraband and, logically, the birthplace of the FARC. Two places, Barrancabermeja and Nevado del Huila, serve well as a proxies evidencing the idea that the geographies of licit transportation and of contraband are, while not diametrically opposite, significantly distinct.

Many of the maps already discussed are of this region, including the remoteness maps of figures 23-28 on pages 115-120, and the map in Figure 78 showing the route of the Alfonso Cano manhunt. The remote highlands of Tolima ceased to be a primary sanctuary for the FARC early in the history of its contest with the government. The FARC was obliged to establish its

retreats further east in the yet more remote eastern slopes of the eastern cordillera, in the Macarena mountain area and the Guayabero/Guaviare and Caguán river basins. Southern Tolima and northern Cauca remained significant if not critical to FARC survival, however. Movement uphill toward the headwaters of the Huila del Nevado and the long north-south mountain ridgeline that it crowns served to create the necessary distance marking the eastern boundary of the Cauca river basin, and to a lesser degree the ridges forming the eastern boundary of Tolima Department, a link to the Pacific coast.

It seems that the FARC had long since demoted the area around Nevado del Huila as a sanctuary, knowing it could only provide temporary refuge and could not serve as a base in which to recruit, recover or rearm. There are too many dangerous bugs, animals, plants and temperatures; human population is sparse, radio signals weak; and repeated movements invite the enemy to reverse ambush tactics. Still, FARC units could escape hot pursuit, and columns carrying weapons, supplies or contraband could rest briefly on the way to and from safer areas in Meta or Caquetá. It is from the internally remote high ground that FARC units descended on the communities between the parks to enforce silence about the movement of their columns, attack annoying police posts, make payments to collaborators, and receive ransoms, prisoners, or portions of other parasitic schemes. By 2011, however, surveillance technology and an increased government resource base extended the distances to police and army culminating points during the pursuit. General economic progress in Colombia also shortened the practical service distances from remote civilian populations. People with an affinity to the government who were indisposed toward the FARC could get everywhere faster and with less risk. At the same time, more and more information and government propaganda arrived in the most remote areas to convince some of the independently minded to think more independently of the FARC.

Cundinamarca

Cundinamarca Department surrounds the federal district of Bogotá, which in Colombia is the antithesis of a remote region. It is the center, and is included in this discussion of remote areas just as the Palace of Justice is included in *tomas* section. Bogotá is the seat of political power, the geographic center of the established system, and as such was the coveted geographic object of leftist guerrilla strategy, particularly of the FARC, and particularly of the FARC's long-term commander, Pedro Marín. Informed Colombians vary in their opinions regarding the turning point of the war between the government and the FARC, some highlighting the battle of Mitú, others all of 2008, and others the killing of senior FARC leaders. This section on Cundinamarca could have been placed in the battles section since the section's narrative turns on what amounted to a siege attempt by the FARC and the breaking of that siege by the Colombian military. It also might have been put in the manhunts section, given that the FARC's prospects of continuing its siege of the capital were all but neutralized once the FARC commander of the siege, Marco Buendía, was killed. Following is a quote from an interview of a prominent Colombian war correspondent:

> "How many battles have you covered? ask my foreign friends. The truth, none. The Colombian armed conflict is not about big battles. It is more of a war of deceptions and traps. 'This is a war of cat and mouse. What is difficult is finding the guerrillas in order to obligate them to fight. It is like seeking a needle in a haystack', I was explained by General Reynaldo Castellanos, commander of the 5th Army Division, when I met him for the first time in early 2003. He was euphoric: his soldiers had just taken down 'Marco Aurelio Buendía', chief of the

FARC in Cundinamarca, the largest victory -- some say the only truly strategic victory -- against the guerrilla up to that time." (León, 2004; 2005, 245).

Some Colombians say the turning point of the war was the election of Álvaro Uribe as president, citing his resolve to deal with the FARC physically. His having arrived at the presidency shortly after the attack on the World Trade Center in New York also radically shifted the dynamic of international attitudes. The Colombian military mounted operations labeled *Libertad I* and *Libertad II* to disable pieces of a siege that FARC leaders had been preparing for some time. The Colombian military implemented *Libertad I* shortly after the government's decision to discontinue the peace negotiations with the FARC in 2002 and to reoccupy the rural *Despeje*. Residents of the capital had been increasingly unable to venture safely out of the city. Their risk distances for trips into rural Colombia, whether to vacation, visit friends and relatives, or to conduct business in person, had been systematically reduced by FARC guerrilla roadblocks and kidnappings.

FARC leaders must have been aware of the urbanizing demographics occurring in the decades since the FARC's inception. They nevertheless understood the advantages of rural domination, not simply as a question of escape possibilities for tactical level units, or for the consequences of advantageous presence in remote civilian communities. The FARC leadership also sensed a vulnerability of Colombian cities, which, inland and uphill, were supplied by a fairly tenuous and relative small number of lines of communication. The licit economic supply lines were capable of far greater throughput than the tedious lines of contraband supply, but they passed through many of the same mountain ranges, perhaps within areas where the FARC could generate strength advantages vis-vis the military. If the FARC could develop the right map algebra, that is, determine or construct those places where the Colombian military would not be

able to overcome risk distance, but where the FARC would be able to hold civilian transportation at risk, the FARC might be able to extract major concessions.

With the success of military operations *Libertad I* and its follow-on *Libertad II* (and smaller parallel operations carried out in Medellín and other cities), the Colombian Army had definitively dissipated FARC prospects for gaining power through the barrel of a gun. There was no longer any possibility that the guerrillas could choke the big cities into some level of submission. Arguments favoring the battle of Mitú as the turning point of the war rest on the idea that the FARC afterwards had to regress to using more hit-and-run tactics, and abandon the war of positions toward which the FARC had presumed. The argument holding *Libertad I* and *II* as the war's turning point rests on the idea that those two operations checked the FARC strategy of surrounding the cities from their rural geographic advantage. I prefer the *Libertad* argument as to the turning point of the war. Guerrilla warfare *is* maneuver warfare. The FARC had grown able to marshal and conduct operations with larger and larger numbers of infantry, reaching numbers into the thousands of fighters, which allowed the FARC to attack, then to attack and take, larger and larger targets. The leftist guerrillas had briefly grown strong enough to dominate the city of Barrancabermeja in the *Medio Magdalena*, or to take the departmental capital Mitú for a pair of days. The FARC became strong enough to maintain the impunity of its leaders within a set of perhaps twenty to thirty rural counties over a span of years. During brief periods, the government stopped even contesting some of that geography of impunity. After about 1998, however, the Colombian government has been reducing the geography of guerrilla impunity within Colombia. In 2013, the sanctuaries for FARC and ELN leaders are, for the most part, outside Colombian territory.

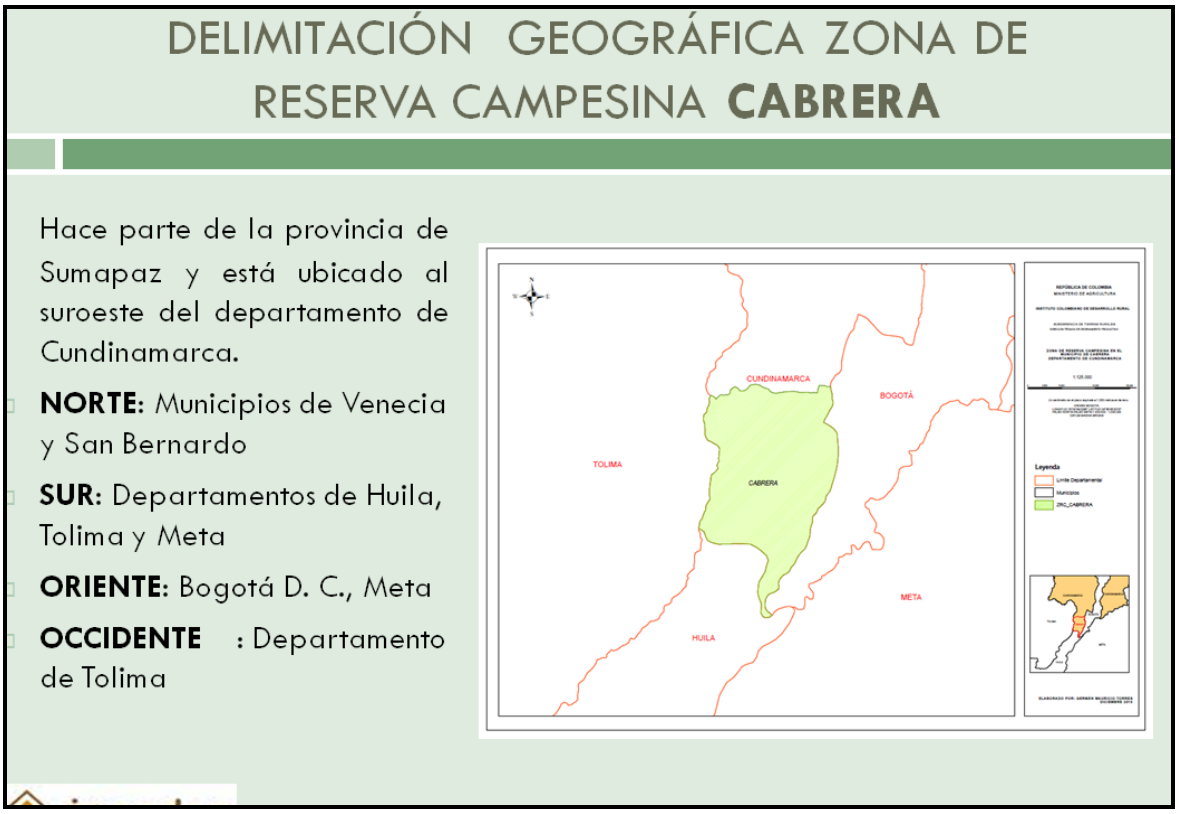


Figure 123: Peasant Reservation Zone projected for the Cabrera County area. (Subgerencia de tierras rurales dirección técnica… 2012)Cabrera County is located at the far south end of Cundinamarca Department. The intention of organizers is apparently to make a peasant reservation zone of the whole county. If controlled by the FARC, the governance model could prove highly valuable for providing greater impunity for contraband activities.

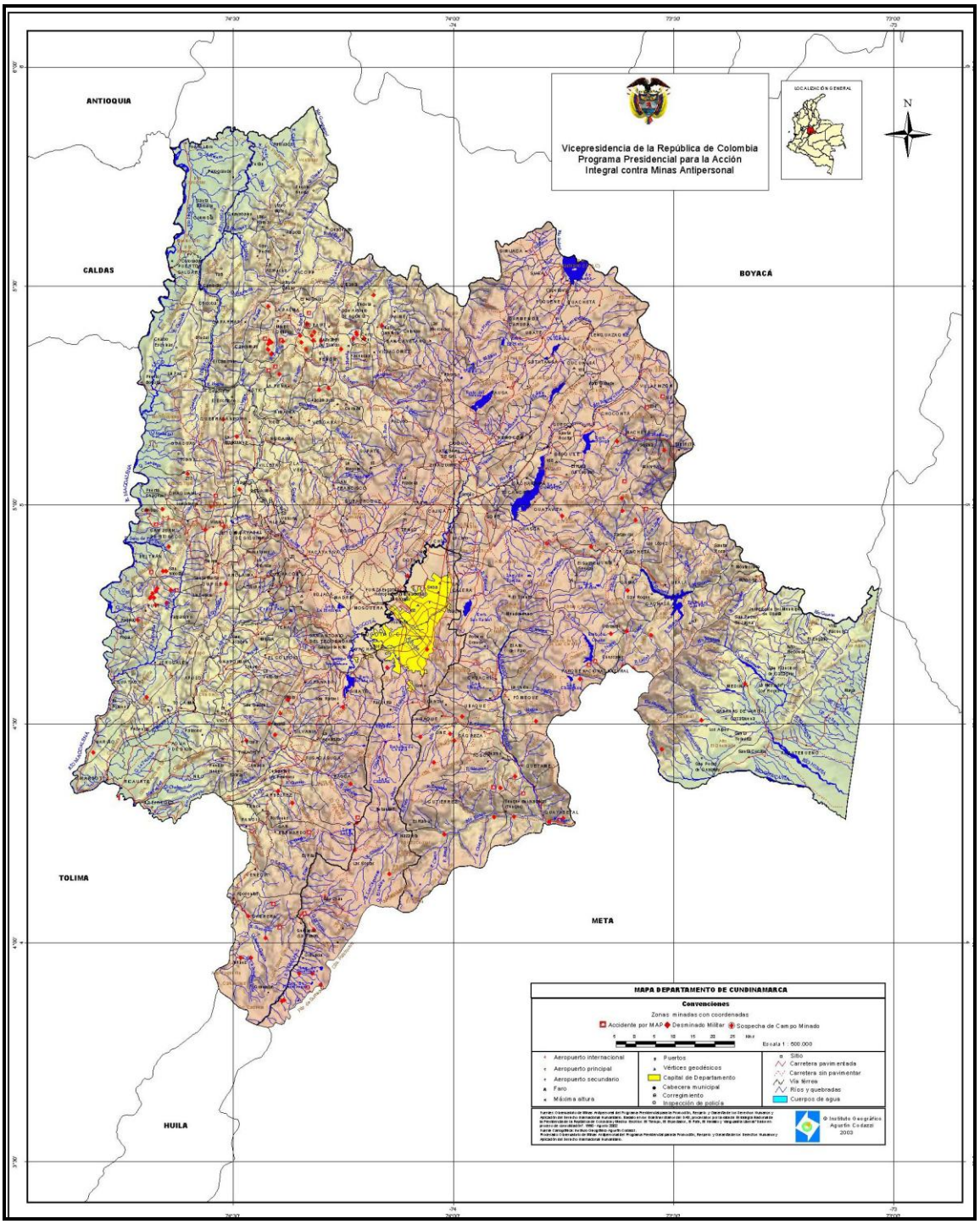


Figure 124: Landmine phenomena spatial distribution in Cundinamarca Department. (Presidencia de la República 2013) Cabrera County is the salient jutting toward Huila Department to the south. Landmine activity there is associated with guerrilla movement uphill toward the east.

Macarena/Caguán/Guaviare

"There is no denying that there has been an evolution, a substantial change in this region, bygone sanctuary of the FARC, because here is where the conflict will be determined." (Univision, 2008) Joint Task Force Omega, a government military organization, which launched operations in March 2004, was intended to deny FARC sanctuary in Meta, Guaviare and Caquetá departments. The operation had to be extended and re-extended behind its originally hoped-for timeline. The distances, terrain and FARC combat capability proved more than hoped if not expected. The task force grew to over twenty thousand personnel, and although not yet completely successful at the time of this writing, there is no doubt that the FARC has been attrited and on the defensive. The FARC apparently agrees that, within Colombia, this vast jungle zone will indeed be where the outcome of the war will be defined. The rest of the battle areas are evolving toward the margins of the country, to Arauca and the Catatumbo especially. In those border areas the question of successful retreat -- the construction of a favorable balance of risk distances in relation to force the government might send in pursuit -- is subject to a FARC-friendly foreign sovereign.

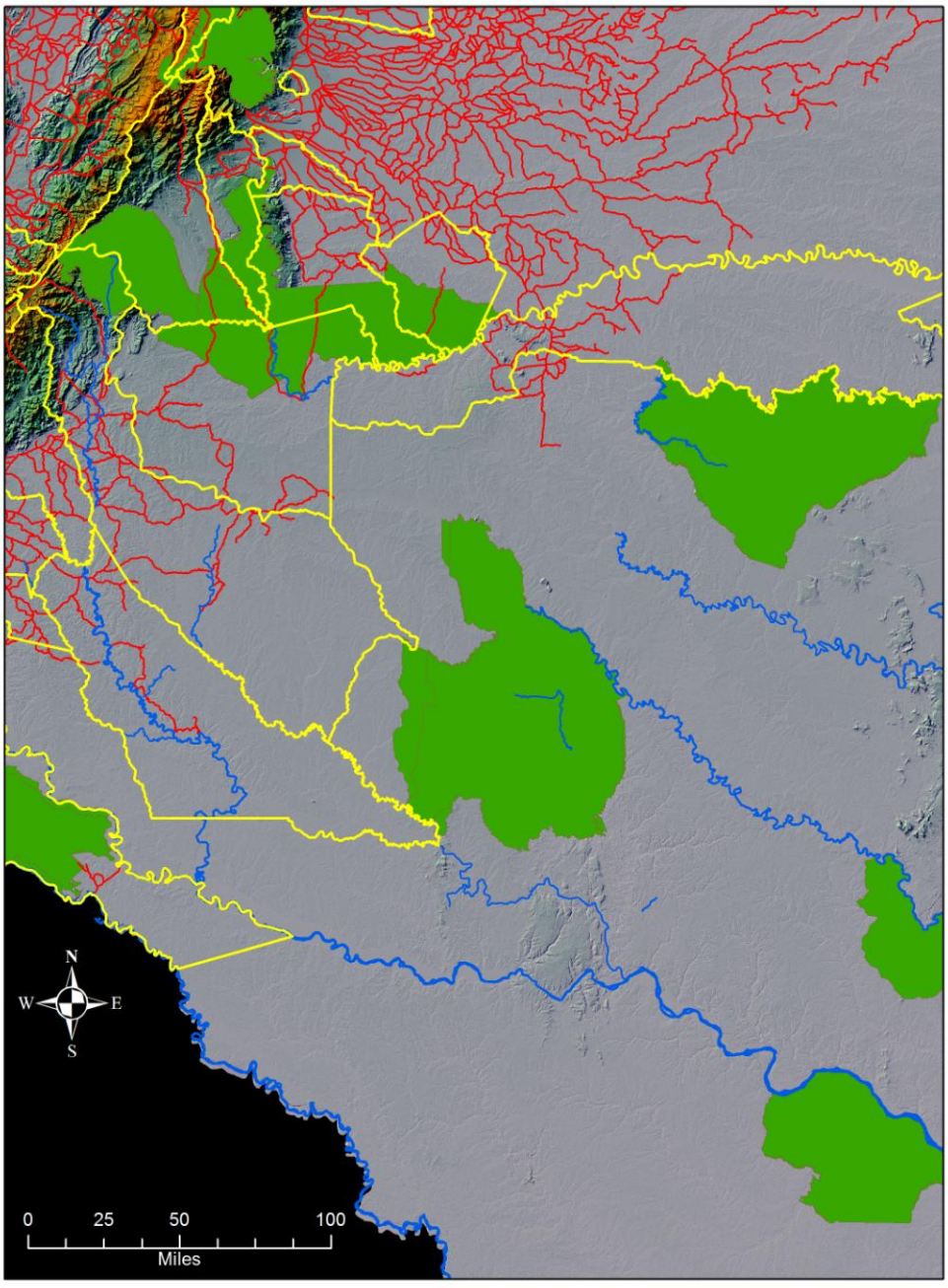
President Andrés Pastrana authorized the *Despeje*, sometimes refered to as the *Zona de Distension* (relaxation of tension zone) by way of a presidential resolution on 14 October 1998 after having held secret discussions with the head of the FARC, Pedro Marín. The officially authorized zone included the counties of La Uribe, Mesetas, La Macarena and Vista Hermosa in Meta Department; and the county of San Vicente del Caguán in Caquetá Department. The combined size of these counties was about 42,000 square kilometers (a little over 16,000 square miles or about the size of Switzerland or 10 eastern Kansas counties). The area included, overlapped or bordered on the national parks *Serranía de la Macarena, Tinigua, Cordillera de*

los Picachos, *Sumapaz* and *Serranía de Chribiquete*. The county of Cartagena de Chairá to the south of San Vicente del Caguán along the Caguán River had already been effectively ceded to the FARC in 1997 in exchange for some 60 prisoner soldiers whom the FARC had captured at Las Delicias in 1996. President Pastrana further ordered his armed forces to withdraw from an additional ten-mile band around the outside of the five counties. The territory over which the FARC had uncontested coercive control was actually over 50,000 square kilometers, and yet the government initiated several programs to extend and augment public services within the *Despeje*. For the time that the *Despeje* was legally extant, which was just over three years, FARC units inside the *Despeje* (or able to escape to it) enjoyed complete impunity. The FARC had achieved a country-sized sanctuary, and many felt they were on their way to establishing an internationally recognized autonomous if not independent area.

Also inside the Macarena/Caguán/Guaviare zone is the location of the abandoned FARC headquarters 'Casa Verde' in Uribe County, as well as early refuges of Liberal guerillas-cum-FARC along the Guayabero and Ariari rivers (which combine to form the Guaviare river, which flows east and north to the Orinoco). An area of the upper Duda River, north of San Vicente del Caguán had essentially been demilitarized (by the government) during the cease-fire between the FARC and the government of Belisario Betancur. (Pardo 2004) Often known as El Pato, it, too, had been one of the early proto-FARC refuges. Today the FARC is disputing ownership the El Pato area through the mechanism of the peasant reservation zone. (figures 127, p. 274; 128, p. 306)

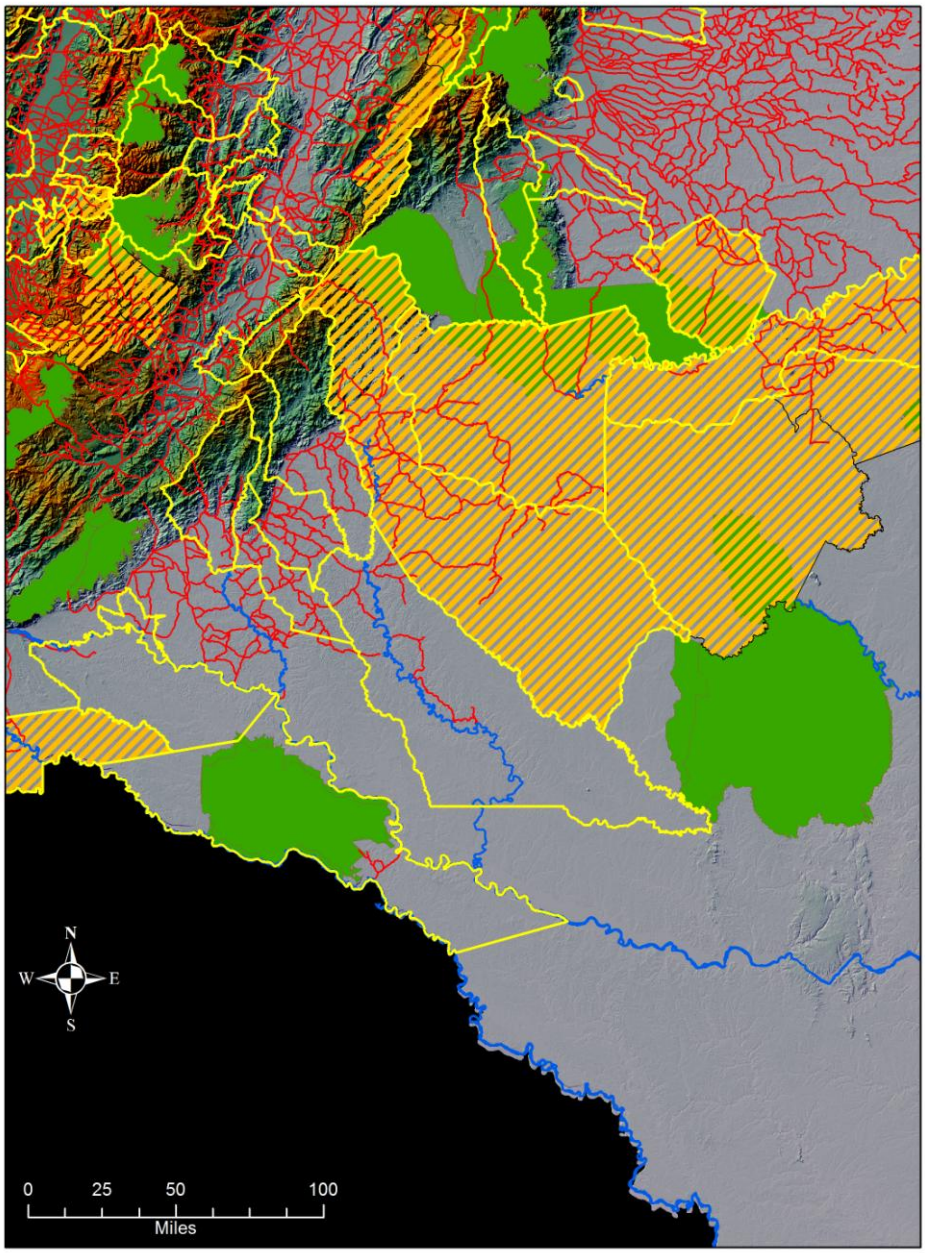
The counties comprising the former *Despeje* are also contiguous with much of the *Área de Manejo Especial de la Macarena* (Macarena Special Handling Area), which was one of the earliest of the formally established nature preserves. (Cormacarena 2010) National land use laws

pertaining to forest reserves or protection areas covered almost the entire Macarena area to one degree or another. Because the *Despeje* officialized the heartland of FARC remote sanctuaries, it loomed as a de-facto and de-jure geographic argument for recognition of the FARC as a belligerent under international law. While FARC leaders may or may not have been indifferent to environmental protection and preservation, their preoccupation with and dependence on coca production (as a bloodflow for their war making strength) had to push environmental sensitivity to the back of its priorities. The regimen of Colombian government environmental protection laws, while never enjoying better than weak enforcement, were mooted by FARC territorial control. That the FARC leadership was greatly responsible for an explosion of industrial coca cultivation in the middle of the most often identified if not most important natural preserve areas in the country did not speak well for the FARC among the most ecologically minded.



Macarena/Caguán/Guaviare area showing the road network,
counties recently considered critical and national parks

Figure 125: Macarena/Caguán/Guaviare showing roads, priority counties and parks. The large park in the center is Chiribiquete Park, shown before it was recently doubled in size.



Macarena/Caguán/Guaviare area showing the road network (red),
counties recently considered critical (yellow borders), national parks,
and counties where peasant reservation zones are being promoted (orange hash marks).

Figure 126: Macarena/Caguán/Guaviare showing priority counties, road network, parks and counties where the FARC and others are promoting the development of peasant reservation zones. This map's extent is shifted slightly to the west to include Asis County in Putumayo Department along the border. Note the perfectly vertical boundary just inside the left neat line. I discuss the significance of that portion of the boundary in the text.

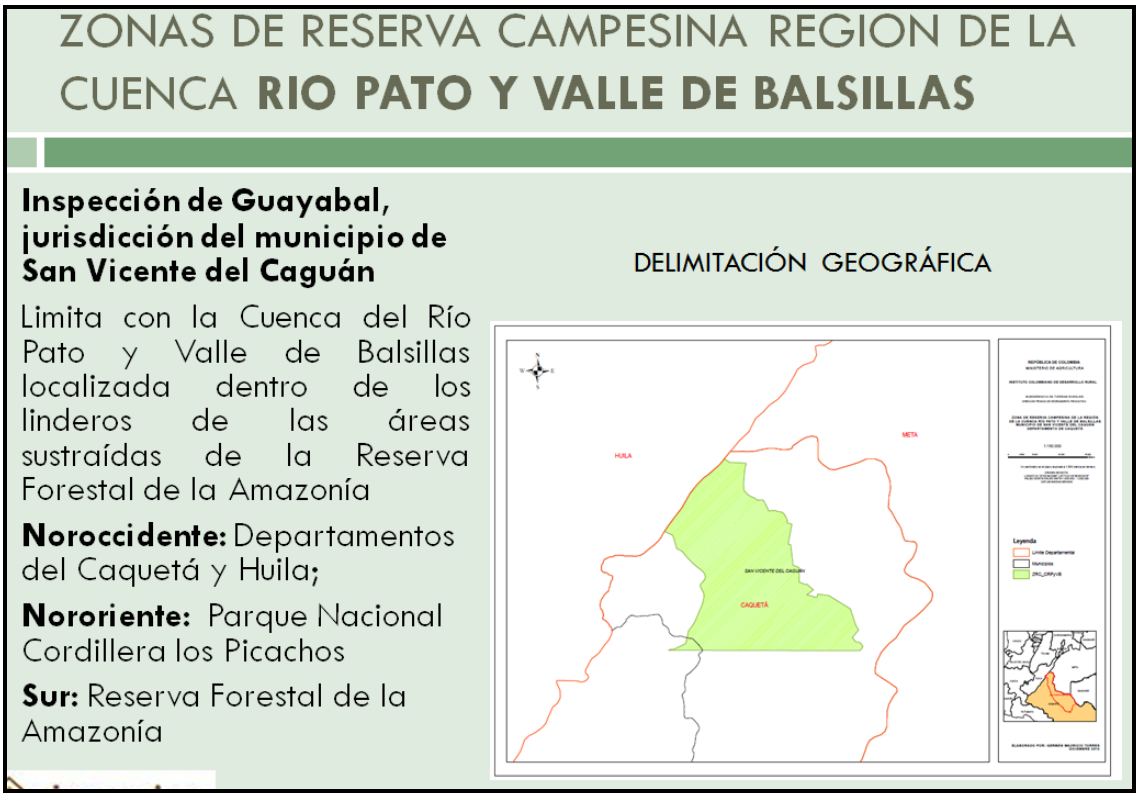


Figure 127: Peasant Reservation Zone projected for the Guayabal area. (Subgerencia de tierras rurales dirección técnica…2012).

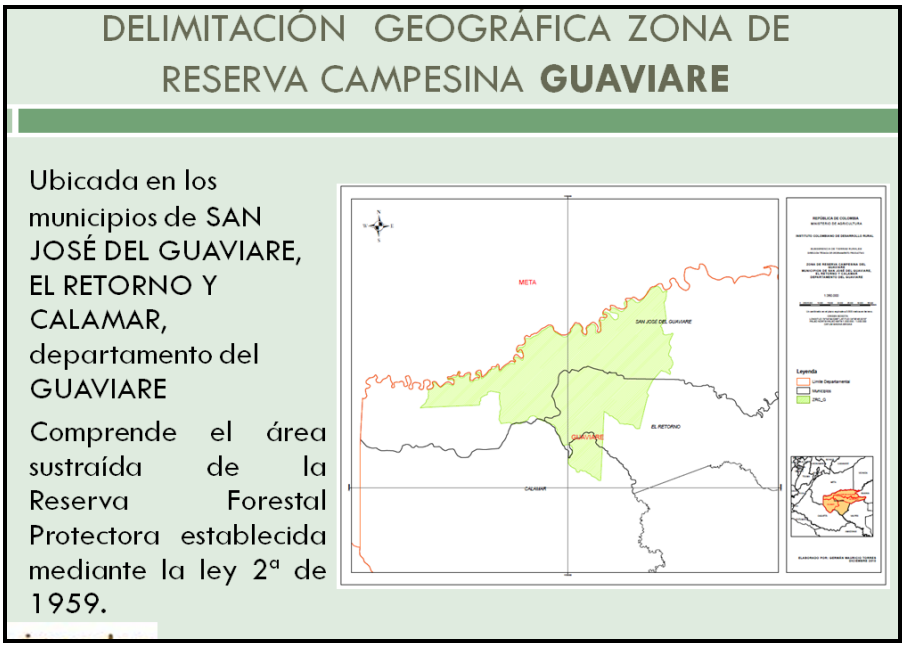


Figure 128: Peasant reservation zone projected for the El Retorno area. (Subgerencia de tierras rurales dirección técnica 2012).

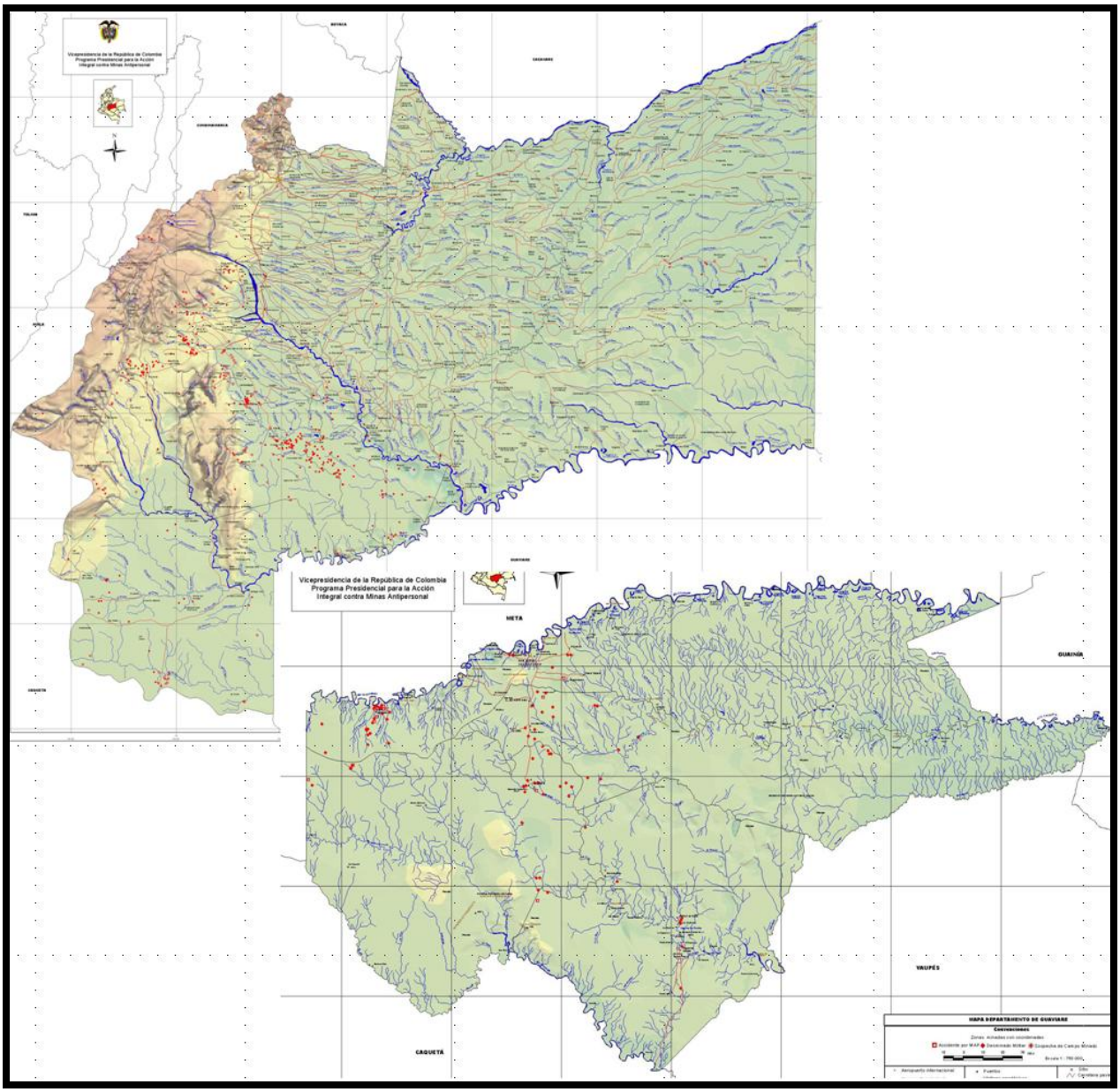


Figure 129: Spatial distribution of landmine phenomena in Meta and Guaviare departments. (Presidencia de la República 2013).

Putumayo

Colombian and United States planners selected Putumayo Department as an area of priority attention when Plan Colombia accelerated in the late 1990s. At the time, it was United States government policy to avoid counterinsurgency and only to assist in counternarcotics. A presidential decision directive in August 2000 stated in pertinent part,

> As a matter of Administration policy, we will not support Colombian counterinsurgency efforts.…This Administration remains convinced that the ultimate solution to Colombia's longstanding civil conflict is through a successful peace process, not a decisive military victory, and believes that counterdrug progress will contribute to progress towards peace. (Clinton 2000)

The policy language reflects political sentiments within the United States and perhaps a belief among foreign professionals that the resolution of Colombia's hyper violence was necessarily through negotiations with the FARC. After all, in having chosen Andrés Pastrana as their president the Colombian electorate had clearly chosen to go down that path. The policy did not square with facts that were evident on the ground. An obvious spatial correlation existed between FARC-dominated counties and coca leaf. Operation Gato Negro (which exposed the scale of the FARC coca agroindustry) in Barrancominas, Guainía would not occur for another six months, at the end of December 1998 (Guzmán, et al 2004, p. 81). It is possible that the Colombian military gave Gato Negro the priority it did because of the incongruous United States policy. Gato Negro verified the dual nature of the FARC as an insurgent revolutionary guerrilla and international cocaine industrialist. Many foreign diplomats received the facts presented by the operation as an inconvenience for relationships -- either between themselves and the Colombian government or between themselves and activists in their home countries. The latter, along with a spread of non-governmental organizations, focused on government human rights abuses, abuses by the paramilitaries, and any collusion between those two actors. The US policy of distinguishing counternarcotics from counterinsurgency would stay in place for a few more

years, but the term *narcoguerrilla* was also in place. Putumayo rose to strategic prominence because there the geography itself reconciled policy.

Figure 136 summarize most of the reasoning for choosing Putumayo as the initial focal zone for Plan Colombia. The spatial distribution of the coca cultivation, as drawn, created a few ineffable questions, ineffable because the concentration patterns undermined programs that were favored by one influential group or another. For instance, between the Putumayo River and the San Miguel (or Sucumbios) River, part of the international border is not the common thalweg, but a straight north-south line at about 76 degrees 25 minutes north longitude, forming a triangle of land between the rivers. (Figure 132) For several years, as the density of coca crop concentration in Putumayo accelerated on the west side of the invisible border, the eastern Ecuadoran side remained coca-free. Since almost every aspect of geography is the same on one side of the line as on the other, it seemed to a number of observers that the explanation had to be political.

The most likely hypothesis was that FARC leaders had made some kind of an agreement with Ecuadoran authorities, local or national. The prospect of chasing that hypothesis to ground was an uncomfortable prospect for many people. Just asserting the underlying geographic facts in public promised not only to exacerbate international frictions, but also to undermine a favored alternative counternarcotics theory and strategy -- that of alternative crop development. If surveys show no illicit cultivation on one side of an imaginary line, and dense cultivation on the other, that fact alone belies the notion that campesino family economic decisions drive the location or scale of the cultivation. Much more plausible is that someone able to make strategic deals and enforce their compliance made the determinations. If what was most plausible had been highlighted and proffered as the factual basis for counternarcotics policy, alternative crop

programs for campesinos would have fared worse than they did in program budget arguments. Cocaine industrialists recruited or attracted a large number of coca agriculturalists (mostly pickers and cocaine processers) into an area that the government had previously considered unsuitable for commercial agriculture. The area had been viewed instead as appropriate for ecological preservation as jungle. Now the government would be asked to build medical clinics and teach peasants to grow yam in those areas.

A less irritating observation about the evident geography of Colombian coca, but one still pertinent to this dissertation, concerns the shape of the coca crop blobs in Putumayo and the Departments just to the north. The blobs in Figure 136 show concentrations that dissipate as one moves downstream to the east. A professional agricultural geographer assured the author that the shape of the crop distribution meant that the movement of the crop was to the west, over the cordilleras to Pacific embarkation points. He based his confidence on the fact that the concentrations were greater toward the west. I think he was wrong about the commodity flow, although it makes sense that agricultural inputs and precursor chemicals would come from the west. Such movement would explain the shape of the blobs, but the resulting product is not a normal agricultural crop. The cocaine has very little mass compared to corn or cattle, coffee or the precursor chemicals. Because it is an illicit crop, the preferred routes are often going to follow smuggling geographies. They will move through areas that are not transportation friendly to licit commerce. The dense road network of the Cauca and Magdalena valleys would normally elicit a quick confidence from the agricultural geographer that therein and nearby was the concentration of agricultural production, and indeed the geographer would be correct. The transportation hub for contraband, however, is where the road is not. Likewise, in Putumayo, the transportation geography of illicit product takes a different shape than the licit transportation.

The agricultural inputs might move west to east, but much of the product could still move west to further east. Since the 2000 blobology, almost all aspects of the spatial distribution of illicit drugs have become more complex. Spraying of the herbicide glyphosphate caused the coca industry to take a number of countermeasures, including dispersion of the crops.

Destruction of whole units of the FARC, and more effective remote intelligence technologies caused shifts in spatial distribution. Attitudes favoring the legalization of the drug as well as effective instances of corruption and collusion have made an imprint. Defeat of FARC elements within the country has opened competitive space for smaller organizations capable only to enforce their presence within smaller geographic extents. The international borders provide the best and closest smuggling filter, and can offer excellent sanctuary to FARC units. A look at the agricultural geography in terms of risk distances suggests that it is in the border zones (Putumayo, the Catatumbo, and Arauca) that the FARC will most hotly defend its coca business, and it is there that the blobs will likely show greatest longevity.

Looking again at the Putumayo area, some of the reasoning for making it a focus of Plan Colombia attention drew on recognition that the FARC had developed a rear support area in the Nueva Loja (or Lago Agrio) area across the border in Sucumbios, Ecuador (Figure 135). The FARC's southern units sent sick and wounded in that direction for care and return to duty. It also used Ecuadoran territory for the movement of a portion of materiel. Some out-movement of drug product also passed through the Sucumbios area. The Ecuadoran border area had become a relatively safe staging location for numerous FARC units. (Figure 133) As the manhunt for Luis Devia bespeaks, on one occasion the FARC trusted in or pushed the Colombian government's respect for the international border too far. (Figure 134)

The Colombia government and the FARC are promoting a peasant reservation zone in the Putumayo region. (Figure 135) Still under debate are the exact definition of rights and duties within the zone, exactly which peasants will live there, and who exactly will represent them. The currently proposed zone is in Puerto Asís County at Bajo Cuembí- Comandante, across the international border from where Luis Devia was killed, at the edge of the coca growing concentration, just where large oil and gas concessions are about to be exercised. On the surface, it looks like a good area for smugglers. As an observational aside, what the maps used to label as Puerto Alegre (Happy Port) they now call

Comandante.

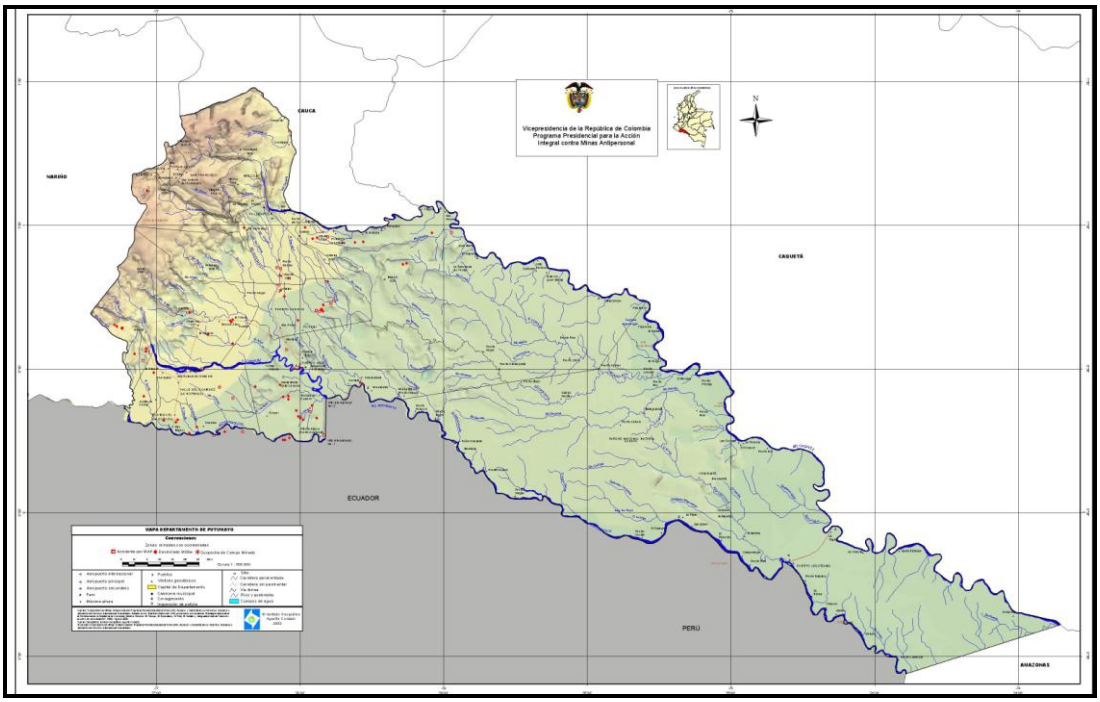
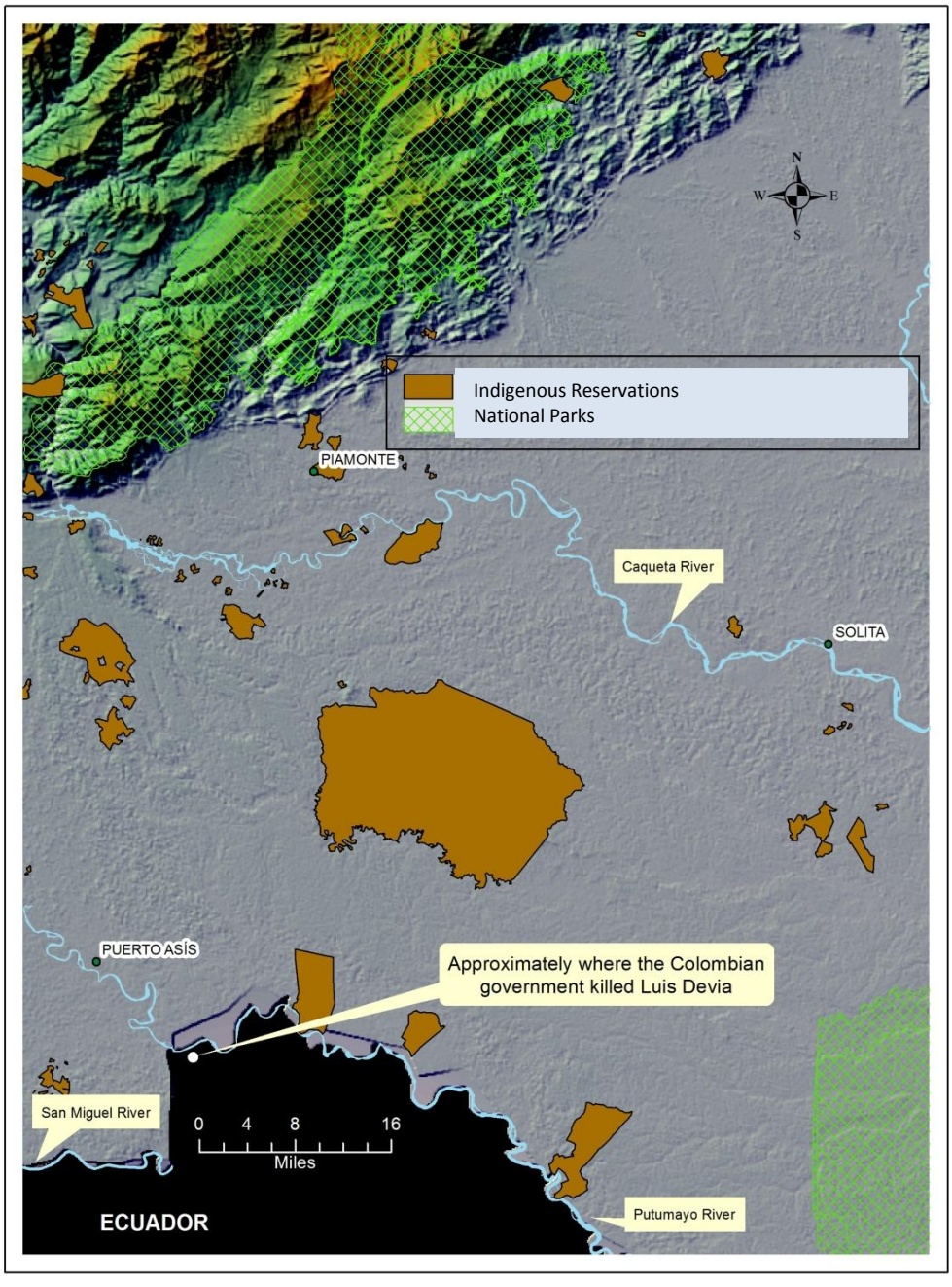


Figure 130: Spatial distribution of landmine phenomena in Putumayo Department. (Presidencia de la República 2013).



I. Colombia-Ecuador border at San Miguel and Putmayo rivers

Figure 131: Southern Colombia showing the Putumayo area across the international border from Ecuador where the Colombian military killed Luis Devia (using ArcGIS and base data from SIGOT 2013).

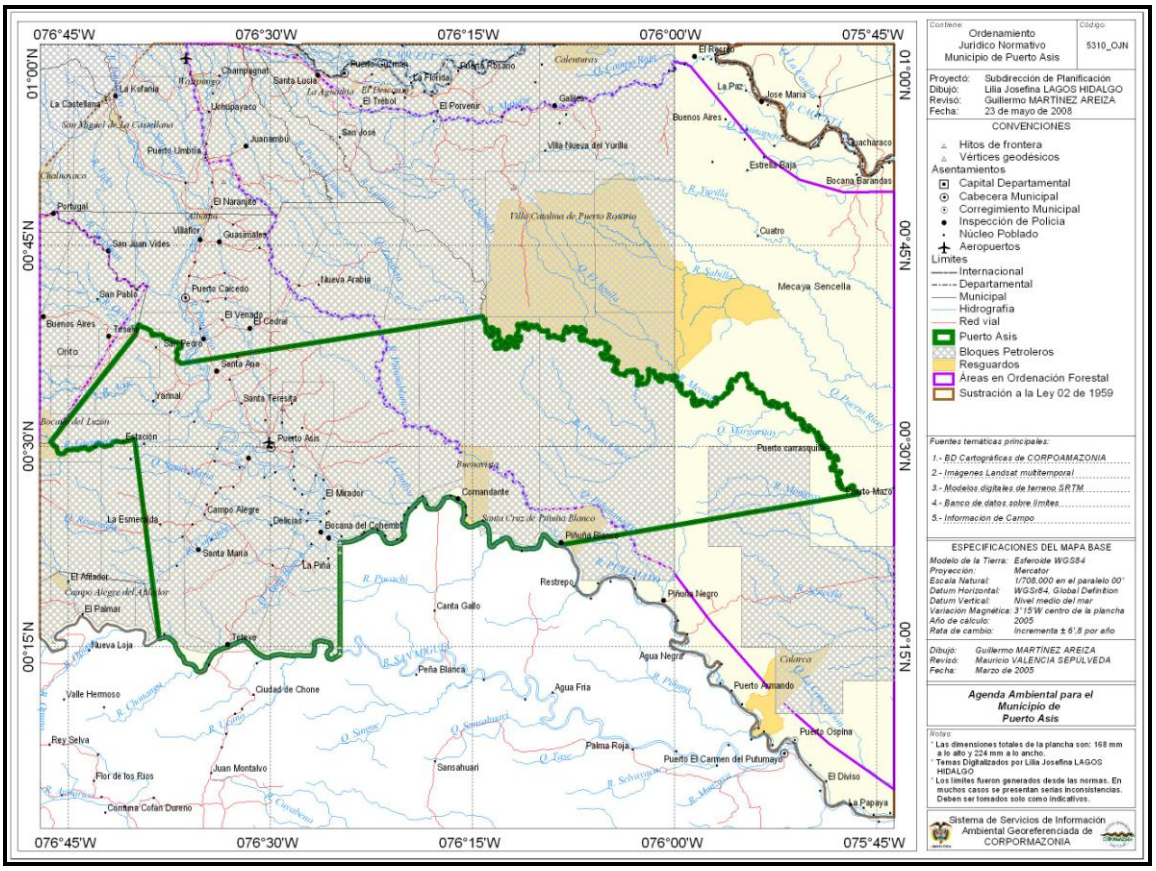


Figure 132: Land-use planning map, Puerto Asís County, Putumayo Department. (Corpoamazonia 2008) The beige areas are indigenous reservations. The hatched area (most of the map) is a composite of hydrocarbon exploration blocks that have been licensed by the government to one or another oil exploration company. The purple lines represent areas under one of the forestry land use laws or regulations (also almost everywhere). The map indicates that legal mechanisms of formalized land use are being applied toward the east, but are not yet everywhere applicable.

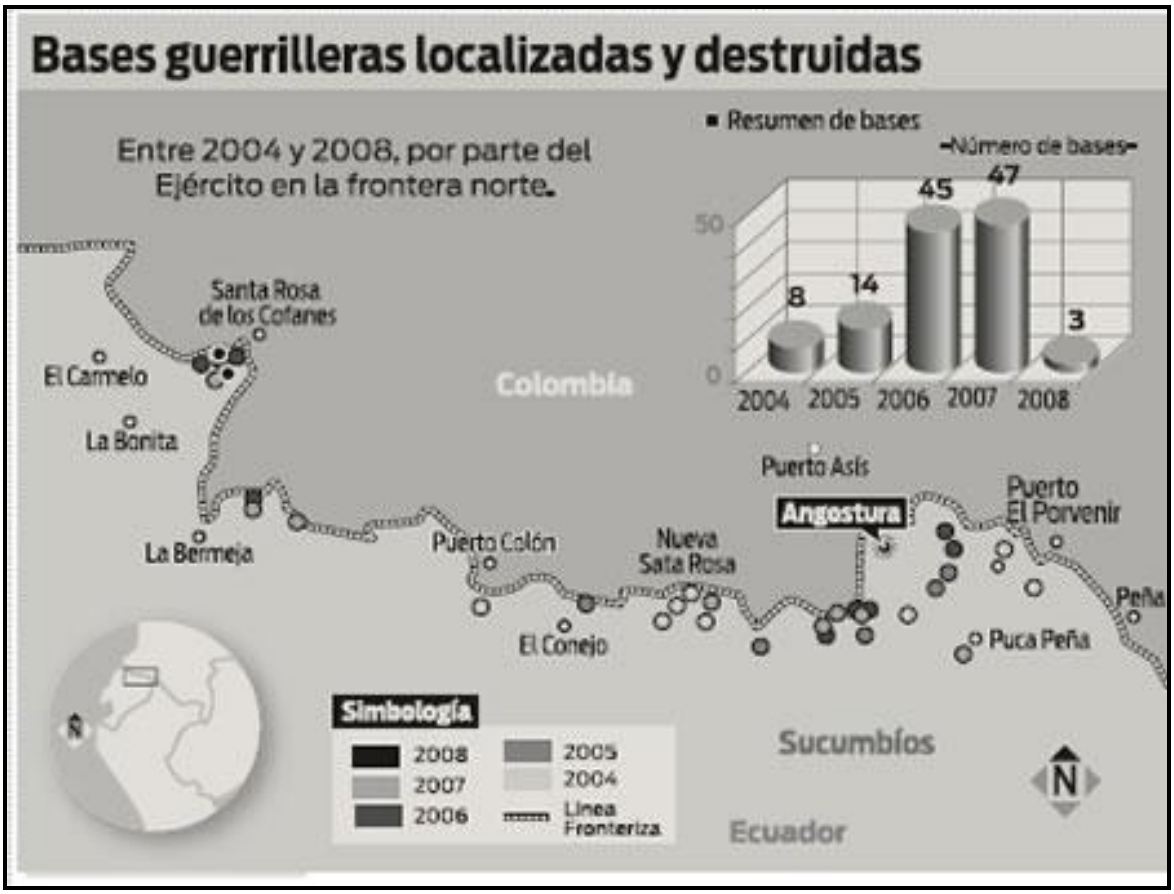


Figure 133: Ecuadoran journalist rendering of FARC presence on Ecuadoran side of the border. Highlighted is Angostura, location of Luis Devia's death. (*Hoy.com.ec* August 2009) The title translates to "Guerrilla bases located and destroyed." The sub-title translates to, "Between 2004 and 2008, by the Army in the northern border." It is referring to the Ecuadoran Army, not the Colombian Army.

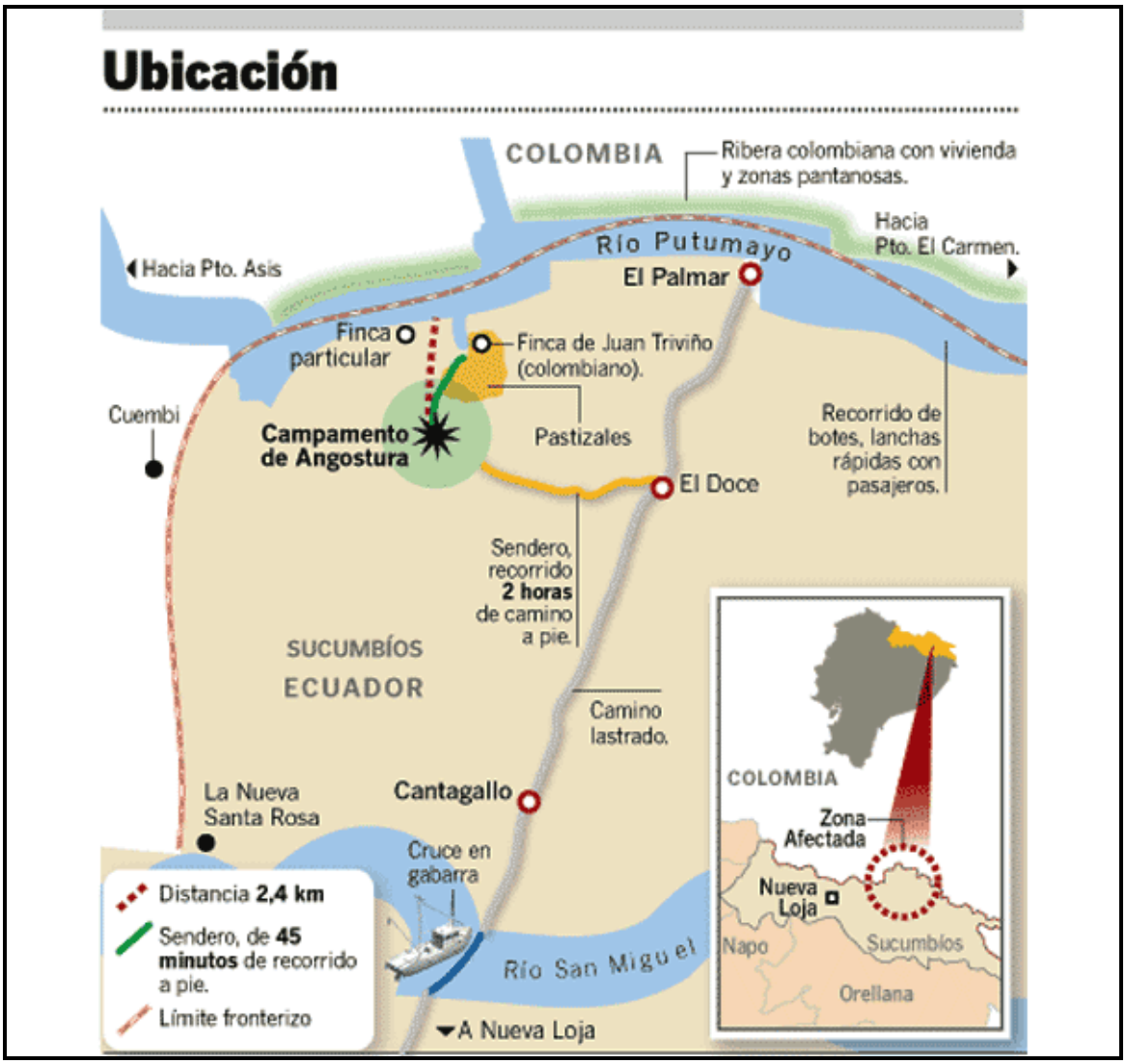


Figure 134: Journalist rendering of where the Colombian government forces killed Luis Devia. The title translates to "Location." (Olmos August, 2009) This event was hugely significant as to the progress of the war, perhaps mostly because of the intelligence gained by the Colombian government from Devia's computers and external drives. The event provides specific location evidence of a cross-border foreign sanctuary. The international diplomatic row following the event bespeaks the risks that chief executives face in contemplating military pursuits that cross international boundaries.

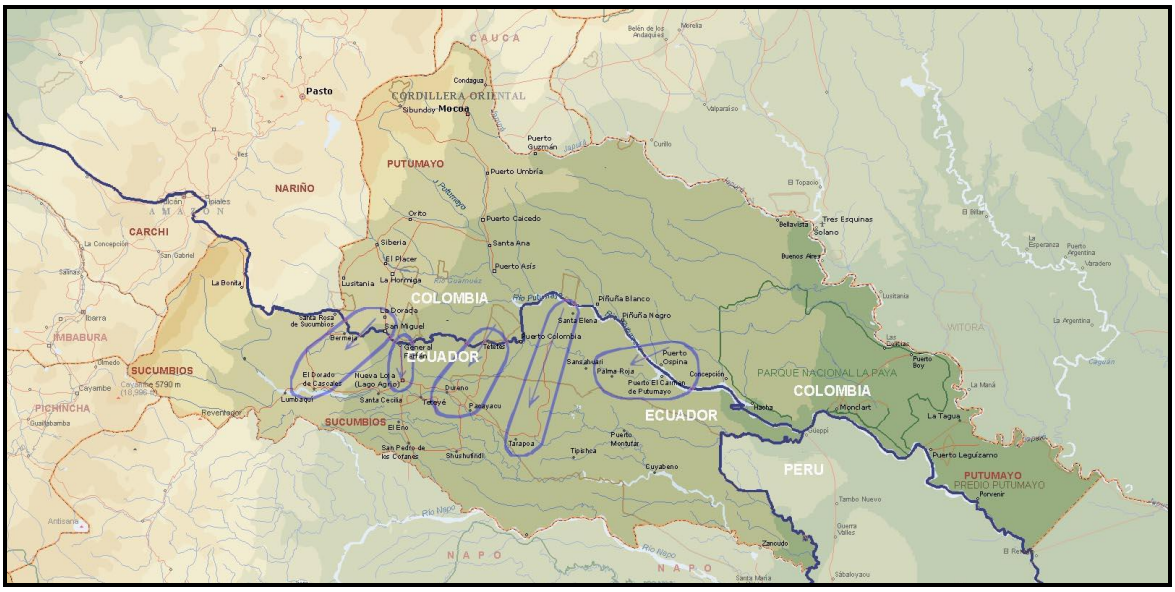


Figure 135: Sucumbios Department, Ecuador. (Codeso 2007) The blue ovals are areas of intense migration. Given the sparse population and the coca-oriented contest of the border economy, it is logical to associate the migration with actions of the various armed actors.

Figure 136: Overlay with illicit drug cultivation for the southern Colombia. Data is circa 1999 (IGAC 2006) The green is coca cultivation concentrations. The red is heroin poppy.

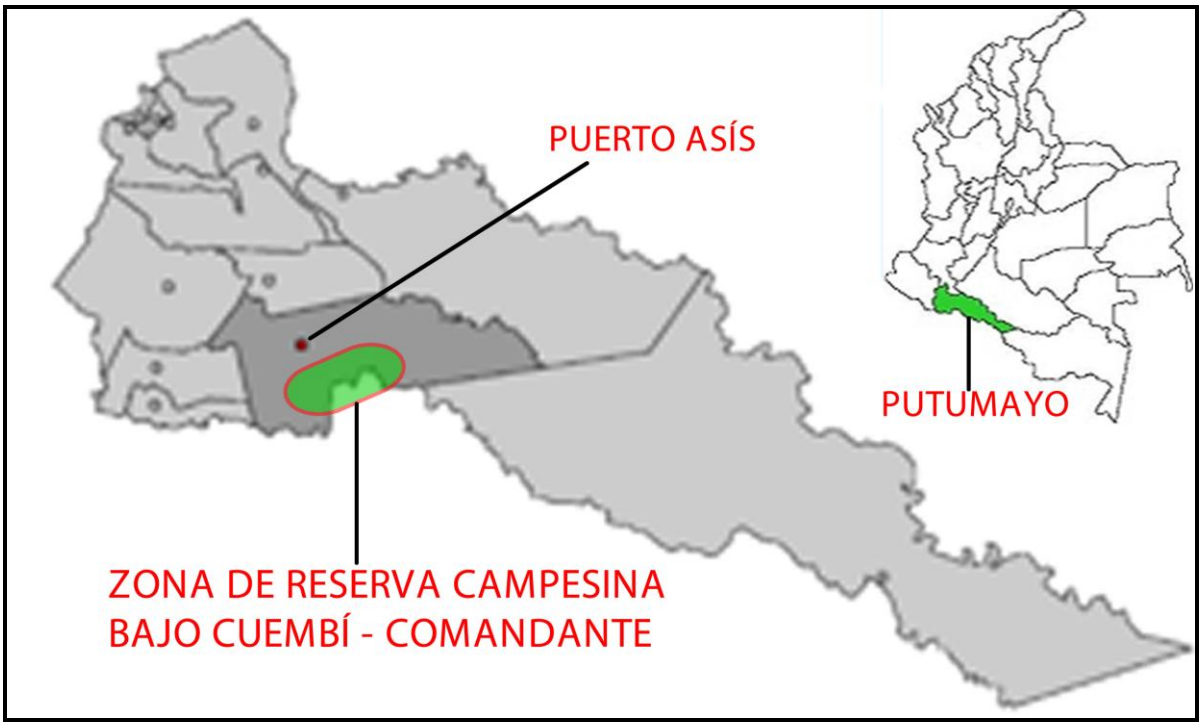


Figure 137: Location of proposed zona de reserva campesina (peasant reservation zone) in Putumayo. (Zona de Reserva Campesina Bajo Cuembí-Comandante January, 2012).

Section 5. Restatement and Conclusion

There exists a phenomenon in human activity that we can appropriately call *risk distance*. It is the distance to that point in time and space beyond which it would be severely imprudent to continue doing whatever one is doing. The risk distance has a more-or-less inverse correlation to cost-distances. While applicable to many human activities, it is an especially useful concept for understanding prospects and outcomes in armed conflict. The spaces that lie beyond the risk distances of one rival generally form the sanctuary of the other rival. Risk distances are sensitive to a variety of geographic factors and are therefore subject to depiction in cartographically recognizable form. In other words, risk distances can be mapped.

In armed conflict, a fugitive entity (trying to escape) often enjoys (or at least seeks) an advantage in risk distances relative to the force that is in pursuit. In the presence of certain geographic phenomena, a pursuing entity will have shorter risk distances than the fleeing entity, and if the risk distances of the pursuers never extend beyond the location of the fugitives, the fugitives successfully escape. This differential in risk distances is especially significant in guerrilla (hit-and-run) warfare, *run* being as much an imperative as *hit*. Space beyond the pursuer's risk distances is the guerrilla's (or bandit's, etc.) sanctuary. The competitive activities and costs of the long internal war in Colombia offer a compelling set of spatial evidence and facilitate argument for the recognition of risk distance and for its useful application in understanding internal armed struggles.

I insist very little regarding the root causes of Colombia's internal warfare. In a concluding paragraph in his book on the Colombian FARC, Gary Leech opines, "government after government has refused to address effectively the root causes of the conflict, with the tragic consequences being a continuation of the violence into the twenty-first century." (Leech 2011, p.

153) As to the reasons why any given armed group might succeed or fail over time, why the conflict is seemingly interminable, or why the warfare might impose its costs on some communities more than on others, there appears to be a dominant condition. Regardless of motives, morality or moral argument, economic performance, or ideological reasoning of any sort, if the members of an organization are incapable of timely reaching physical sanctuary when being pursued by their rivals, that organization will not thrive, if it survives at all.

In Colombia, the success of a variety of armed groups in escaping to sanctuary (and especially the success of the FARC and ELN in so doing) has exposed certain regions that are by the nature of their geography especially favorable for accessing sanctuary. Routes to sanctuary, however, do not just lead *to* sanctuary. They lead *from* somewhere as well, and that somewhere is often the source location or transportation infrastructure of a marketable commodity. In Colombia, an illegal armed group might engage directly in the extraction, cultivation or movement of the commodity, or the group might apply some indirect predatory technique such as taxation or extortion.

Communities located along the path from the illegal group's economic target to the groups' sanctuary have been subjected disproportionately to the costs of the war. Factors such as the relative socio-economic performance of remote communities, or the political autonomy of those communities, are of little consequence. Who outdistances whom during pursuit and escape is a more significant question for outcomes, including the safety and prosperity of the communities most affected by the war.

Among the geographic phenomena that seem to have great impact on the relative risk distances faced by pursuer and pursued are mountain slopes, jungle expanses, and international borders. Remoteness alone is not as favorable to the fugitive as is remoteness combined with

escape route options. It benefits predatory organizations if economic targets are not dangerously distant from escape geography. It benefits smugglers if distances to ports or to locations where money can be laundered (and illegal items fenced) is not dangerously great. With three mountain ranges, jungle expanses, five international borders, two ocean coastlines, several large cities, and dozens of marketable commodities, Colombia provides multiple combinations of all these advantages.

The research perhaps suggests that countries or regions not offering geography advantageous to the fugitive need not long suffer insurgencies or organized criminal activity. The Colombian experience is one in which geographic phenomena have played a critical role in the long-term survival of outlaw and insurgent groups. Rather than a notion of geographic predeterminism, however, the observation is of human planning and resolve continuously un-determined, that is, constrained or delimited by geography. The findings might at least serve to force a re-examination of arguments that stress other determinants of outlaw or insurgent survival, or of the suffering of civilian populations caught in internal conflicts. The physical sanctuaries of illegal armed groups constitute a geography of impunity.

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